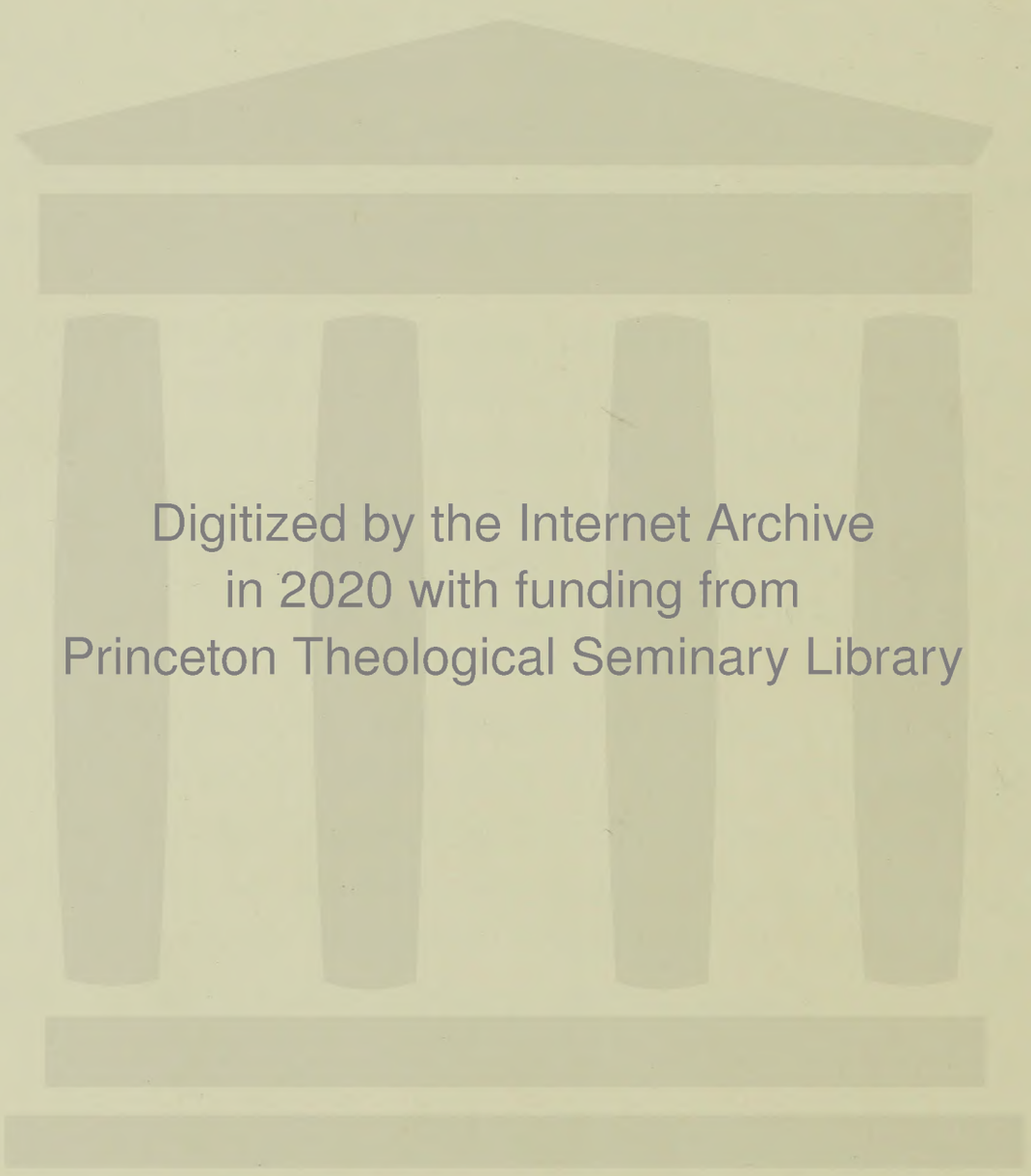

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CONTENTS

Editorial

Koinonia Journal is dedicated to providing a forum for interdisciplinary conversation among students of religion. A refereed journal produced by Ph.D. candidates at Princeton Theological Seminary, *Koinonia* continues to provide the first publishing opportunity for many Ph.D. candidates. As this issue again demonstrates, the journal accepts innovative essays from a variety of academic fields on a wide range of topics. The editors encourage experimentation in form and content: we expect the essays to excite the imagination and to encourage discussion. As my own editorial tenure draws to a close, I must state what an honor it has been to serve on the journal's editorial board. The departmental editors, without complaint, have given of their time and efforts to see that manuscripts are read and authors notified of decisions in a timely manner. The increase in the number of manuscripts we have received as the journal has gained recognition among students in religious studies has increased exponentially the efforts required of these departmental editors. They are to be praised for their continued good humor and leadership. Their high standards of professionalism and dedication reassure this editor that the journal will continue to thrive long after his short tenure.

This issue of *Koinonia Journal* presents four essays that are on the surface widely divergent. However, read together, they address a common theme: the essays all relate in one way or another to the linguistic construction of reality. They address a problem of vital interest to academia in the late twentieth century,

the problem of language. For example, the essay by Carol Antablin Miles—with its focus on the concrete language of a single line within a single Psalm ("Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock") and unremitting attention to the needs of the practical theologian in the Christian pulpit—would appear at first glance to have little in common with the philosophical essay on the work of Alasdair MacIntyre by Wioleta Polinska. However, the two essays share more than a little common ground—though one author writes about incommensurability and intranslatability, while the other tries to bridge the worlds of Psalmist and rap artist. Similarly, the essays by S. Brent Plate and Jim Perkinson turn on questions of language: the move from oral and written to visual communication for Plate and the language of race for Perkinson. Despite the common thread that unites them, the subject matter of the individual essays varies to the extent that a separate paragraph of introduction should be dedicated to each.

Carol Miles, a Ph.D. candidate at Princeton Theological Seminary, writes for practical theologians about encountering texts that reside at the margins of the canon. She asks how the modern preacher and listener work together to interpret the language of the ancient text. She writes about the distances that must be overcome in interpretation: the distance from the margins to the central passages in the canon, the distance from ancient song writers and hearers to modern readers, and the distance from suburban homeowners to rap musicians. Miles's essay, originally subtitled "Rage, Rap and Restitution," is a model of interpretation for the preacher (read, among other things, theologian and interpreter of biblical texts) who wishes to practice careful and effective exegesis. She places the person who hears the sermon in a position to hear the gospel again, to see the central biblical texts again, but from the edges of the canon and from the perspectives of strangers (or should that be neighbors?).

Jim Perkinson, Ph.D. candidate in Theology at the University of Chicago, carefully picks his way along a dangerous

precipice in his essay entitled "On Being 'Doubled': Soteriology at the White End of Black Signifyin(g)." The way is dangerous, yes, but ultimately rewarding. Perkinson, who realizes that theology done according to traditional academic conventions is done with a racial and ethnic bias—even, or especially, when it is done without reference to race—proposes a "white" theology done under the gaze and judgment of black theology. He contends that the Euro-centric theological establishment has still (more than a decade later) not taken seriously the challenge of James Cone's black Jesus. For Perkinson, the matter of language is central. The hegemony practiced by "classical" theology in controlling the identity of Jesus (unifying it) is under judgment, is, in linguistic terms, being "doubled" by black theology. For the "white" theology proposed by Perkinson, grace means "a forcible conversion out of the ease of monolithic 'transparency' and into the anguished uncertainty of an opaque encounter" (p. 203)—everything from our own identity to the identity of Christ is at stake. Perkinson challenges practitioners of "white" theology to leave the ease of their familiar linguistic constructions for the uncertainty of an encounter with the judgment of black theology. In short, he urges the reader to get saved.[1]

Brent Plate, a Ph.D. candidate at Emory University, writes about the shift in communication media. He traces an historical trajectory previously identified by several scholars from speech through writing to electronic/visual communication. He highlights the work of Jane and John Dillenberger and Mieke Bal as examples of the sorts of interpretive changes that take place as the media of communication change from textual to visual. He presents an analysis of the American Bible Society's project to translate the Bible into video. Finally, Plate presents what he calls "Tactics for the Time Being," the beginning steps toward a critical theory which accounts for the change in media. He urges

[1] Watch for Perkinson to return in the Spring 1995 issue of *Koinonia* with an essay in response to Osayande Obery Hendricks's "Guerrilla Exegesis."

professors to reconsider issues of pedagogy in the light of the current shift and to encourage new modes of criticism.

In the final essay, Wioleta Polinska, a Ph.D. candidate in Theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, launches an extensive critique of Alasdair MacIntyre's concept of untranslatability and incommensurability. Polinska would have Christians interact with persons of other faiths, so that "we can test our traditions for their functional efficacy and make the corrections which are required by such evaluations" (p. 259). Polinska's reading of MacIntyre is thorough and her criticisms are fair. She brings to bear the voices one expects in such a conversation: Davidson, Fowl, Rorty, and Rescher—along with a well-placed quote from Hilary Putnam. This essay probes the question of language in the very detailed way one expects of philosophical theology, but with a readability often lacking in such essays. It is well worth the read.

This issue of *Koinonia* also includes a selection of critical reviews of recent books in religion. These reviews are presented according to discipline in the following order: Biblical Studies, Theology, Ethics, Religion and Society, Church History, Missions and Ecumenics, History of Religions, and Practical Theology. One or more disciplines may not be represented in any given issue.

—GREGORY L. GLOVER

KOINONIA VI/2 (1994) 151-173

"Singing the Songs of Zion"

and Other Sermons from the Margins of the Canon

Carol Antablin Miles

THERE IS NO QUESTION ABOUT IT, PSALM 137 IS A PROBLEM for preachers. The familiar opening lines of verse, "By the waters of Babylon, / there we sat down and wept, / when we remembered Zion. / On the willows there / we hung up our lyres," give way in the final stanza to that most frightening and twisted beatitude, "O daughter of Babylon, you devastator! / ... Happy shall he be who takes your little ones / and dashes them against the rock!"(RSV) The brutality of this image and the vengeance it solicits raise a host of hermeneutical issues for the parish minister intent on proclaiming the Gospel for a particular congregation. With the ethical demands of the New Testament in view, does Psalm 137 have a legitimate place in the Christian pulpit? If so, how will such a difficult, even offensive, text function in the life of the Church today?

For centuries the Christian community has responded to this difficult text with partial or complete censorship. Psalm 137 has either been routinely sanitized for reading in public worship or simply omitted from the community's "working canon" of Scripture altogether. A brief look at the hymnody and lectionaries of the Church will illustrate the point.

Robert Davidson in his book, *The Courage to Doubt*, analyzes the treatment of the Psalter in the Church of Scotland's *Church Hymnary, Third Edition* (1973). He finds that of the Bible's one hundred and fifty psalms, fifty-eight are incorporated in the body of the hymnbook; Psalm 137, as we might guess, is not one of them. In fact, only four of the fourteen community lament psalms and ten of forty-one individual laments appear in that Church's hymnbook. Those that do appear rarely appear in their entirety (i.e., with the lament intact).[1] This, of course, is by design. According to Davidson,

> The approach to the riches of the psalms is highly selective. Psalms which affirm the greatness and majesty of God and which incorporate the people's response of confident praise are well represented: psalms which give voice to the questions which threaten faith, which explore the darkness of human despair and crippling meaninglessness, which show men [*sic*] reacting bitterly against the forces of evil in the world, are virtually eliminated. (Davidson 1983:15)

He concludes, "The compilers of *The Church Hymnary, Third Edition*, therefore, seem to be saying that the lament element which is so prominent in the Old Testament psalms has no point of contact with the experience or need of the worshipper today" (Davidson 1983:14–15).

An analysis of the Church's lectionaries reveals a similar pattern of censorship. In his book, *Living with the Lectionary*, Eugene Lowry warns preachers to "watch what is missing," that is, to take note of what chapters and verses have been edited out of the list of biblical selections (Lowry 1992:57). Often there will

[1] In the new *Presbyterian Hymnal* (1990), for example, the selection for Psalm 137, "By the Babylonian Rivers," appropriates only the psalm's first three verses.

be a decided cast or tone to the deleted verses, and their removal may render the text in question a "wholly different reality" (Lowry 1992:59). With regard to Psalm 137, the majority of denominational lectionaries have retained the first six or seven verses and simply dropped the enigmatic final two. In this case, as far as Lowry is concerned, "the psalmist's word about the happiness coming to those 'who take your little ones and dash them against the rock,' Psalm 137:9, is appropriately excluded from the lectionary" (Lowry 1992:52).

What effect should this practice have on the preacher? Does the exclusion of Psalm 137 from the hymnody and lectionaries of the Church mean it should be barred from the pulpit as well? Does the possibility for interpretation that preaching affords (and that this text certainly demands) make the pulpit a more favorable environment for Psalm 137 than other liturgical contexts (e.g., hymns or responsive readings which generally appear without comment)? If Psalm 137 is in fact to be retained, in what form should it be preached? In its entirety? Will dropping the final two verses indeed render it a wholly different—and, in this case, far more desirable—reality?

The use or disuse (and, undoubtedly, misuse) of Psalm 137 in the Christian pulpit raises a larger theoretical question regarding the proper relationship of the Bible to preaching. David Buttrick spoke to this question in the first of three lectures delivered at Princeton Theological Seminary in October 1992. He told the story of a young homiletician who once argued eloquently for how Psalm 137 might be retained in its entirety and treated in the Christian pulpit. What was most striking to Buttrick, however, was what took place in an interchange following her presentation. "The first question asked was absolutely devastating: Why bother? Why bother preaching on a difficult text like Psalm 137 when we could be announcing the Gospel, with or without the Bible? ... Is our task to preach the Bible because it's the Bible," Buttrick asks, "or is our task, in a baby bashing world, to make some sense of meaning for human creatures before God?" (Buttrick 1992). At

the heart of the matter for Buttrick is the tension he identifies between "preaching the Gospel" and "preaching the Bible." It is into this tension that we must plunge headlong if we are to recover Psalm 137 for the Christian pulpit.

THE GOSPEL AND THE BIBLE

In certain respects David Buttrick is correct. There is indeed a difference between preaching the Gospel and preaching the Bible. P.T. Forsyth first recognized this at the turn of the century. "Biblical preaching," he said, "preaches the Gospel and uses the Bible, it does not preach the Bible and use the Gospel" (Forsyth 1907; rpt. 1964:26). Both Buttrick and Forsyth would agree that the purpose of biblical preaching is to preach not the text itself, but the good news to which the text witnesses. As Charles Wood explains in his essay on theological hermeneutics, the aim is not knowledge of a text, but the knowledge of God a text fosters (Wood 1981; rpt. 1993:42). The individual texts of Scripture, then, function instrumentally for the preacher. We use them in order to get at the reality to which they point. In effect, we preach *through* the Bible *to* the Gospel.

Where Forsyth would have disagreed with Buttrick, however, is regarding the ability to "announce the Gospel, with or without the Bible." Buttrick rightly suggests that we can preach the Gospel without basing a sermon on a biblical text. Many topical sermons and sermons based on theological themes or credal statements may indeed be proclamation of the Gospel. But underlying all such themes and statements is the content of the biblical witness. Elsewhere Buttrick criticizes traditional "biblical" preaching for its failure to "name God in the world" (Buttrick 1987:17). The role of the preacher undoubtedly includes discerning divine presence and activity in the world and holding it up for all to see. But how will God be recognized in the world unless God has been previously met in the pages of Scripture? For apart from the Bible's witness to God's presence and activity in the world, realized most poignantly in the person and work of

Jesus Christ, we would have no access to the Gospel we are commissioned to preach.

It is from the biblical witness that we first gain access to the Gospel we preach, and it is to the biblical witness that we continually return for a critique of the Gospel we preach. In other words, as Wood argues, the Bible functions as both "source" of the community's faithful memory and "canon" (or norm) of the community's faithful practice (Wood 1981; rpt. 1993:87). In its role as source, the Bible acts as the primary resource for the Church's self-understanding, containing the earliest elements of tradition the community has identified as decisive for its own identity and purpose. In its role as canon, the Bible functions as the standard of judgment by which the community's life and witness are assessed and corrected.

It is crucial to note that in Wood's scheme, while all biblical texts are considered to function as source, the way a given text may function canonically is a far more complicated matter. He explains,

> The Bible as canon is not simply the sum of its parts. It is the new instrument produced by the working together of these parts when they are taken in a certain way, that is, according to the canonical construal which has been adopted ... Any biblical text has the possibility of canonical authority only indirectly, as it either contributes to or expresses the sense of the canon as a whole. There are texts which contribute to the constitution of the canon, that is, which enhance or illumine its witness somehow, but which could hardly be understood to be expressive of the sense of the canon in themselves. Their elimination from the canon might diminish its witness or its effectiveness in one way or another, even though they are in no way representative of the canon. (Wood 1981; rpt. 1993:109–110)

For Wood the canon exists only in its unity, with all texts contributing in some way to its constitution. To eliminate certain

texts, even those which are in no way expressive of the overall sense of the canon, would be to change the character of the canon altogether. All of Scripture must be heard if we are to discern most fully its canonical sense. It is only then that the Bible may function canonically, that is, to critique and call into question the use of individual texts as normative for Christian faith and practice.

This brings us back to the problem with which we began, the status of Psalm 137 within the Christian community. If I have appropriated Wood correctly here, to disqualify this psalm from the preaching of the Church because it is not in itself expressive of the overall sense of the Gospel would be to risk changing the character of the Gospel itself. To put it more simply, we need Psalm 137 in order to identify the Gospel in the first place. It is only when the biblical witness is taken as a whole that we are able to determine which of its parts are central to its essence and which are peripheral. It is through our familiarity with the entire canon, in all its breadth and depth, that we are able to recognize the parable of the prodigal son as a "letter from home" and Psalm 137 as a "postcard from the edge."

One problem remains. In order to access the Gospel we must go through the Bible. However, in journeying through the Bible in search of the Gospel we will inevitably encounter texts such as Psalm 137. When this is the case, preachers become like suburban homeowners who while commuting to and from work each day must drive by a row of unsightly houses that border their neighborhood. They find them at once an embarrassing eyesore and a threat to their families' security. Property appraisers have made them keenly aware that the existence of these houses diminishes the value of their own homes. Try as they might to ignore them, they cannot make these unseemly houses go away. So it is with Psalm 137. Its presence in the canon of Christian Scripture cannot be avoided. On the contrary, its presence there cries out to be addressed. Just how we might address it is the question to which we now turn.

GETTING THE TEXT IN VIEW

In an essay on the use of Scripture in contemporary preaching, Thomas G. Long exhorts the preacher to "rattle every door and try every window in an effort to enter the textual environment and to experience the total impact of the text" (Long 1990:350). What follows is an exegesis of Psalm 137 using a variety of critical tools (historical, literary, and canonical) in order to explore possible meanings of the text and ways it might be faithfully preached for a U.S. congregation. We will begin where most trained exegetes would, with a translation of the text and an investigation of historical and form critical concerns.

Psalm 137

1. By the rivers of Babylon
   there we sat down and wept
   when we remembered Zion.
2. On the poplar trees in her midst
   we hung up our lyres,
3. for there our captors
   required of us words of song
   and those who took us prisoner demanded joy:
   "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
4. How could we sing
   the LORD's song
   in a foreign land?

5. If I forget you, O Jerusalem,
   let my right hand forget how to play
6. let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
   if I do not remember you,
   if I do not set Jerusalem
   above my highest joy.

7. Remember, O LORD,
the day of Jerusalem
to the children of Edom,
those who said, "Tear it down! Tear it down!
Down to its foundation!"
8. O daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,
happy is the one who would repay you in kind
what you have done to us,
9. happy is the one who would take your children
and smash them against the rock!

Textual notes:
Verse 3

The meaning of the Hebrew *wĕtôlālēnû* is uncertain. *tll* exists as a root meaning "mock, deceive, trifle with," but BDB lists it as only occurring in the H binyan, which is not the type of form we have here. Freedman argues that it is a secondary root linked to *hll* "boast" or is perhaps related to *htl* "mock" (Freedman 1971:192). BHS notes that the form as it stands seems to have been derived from *yll* "howl (in distress)." The LXX, however, uses the verb *apagō* "to lead away (a prisoner)" suggesting, along with the Targum, a semantic connection to *šll* "spoil, plunder." Support for this translation may be found in the work of Driver (1935) and Guillaume (1956) who, by comparing the Arabic *talla*, rendered *wĕtôlālēnû* "those who took us prisoners" and "our slave drivers," respectively (Allen 1983:236).
Verse 5

tiškaḥ yĕmînî, literally, "let my right hand forget." The LXX preserves the repetition of "forget" but provides a passive form, *epilēsthein* "be forgotten." BHS proposes a form of *kḥš* "to grow weak, lean; to fail" which has commonly been taken up and translated "let my right hand wither" (cf. NRSV, NEB). In keeping with the parallelism of v.6 which alludes to the psalmist's vocation as a singer-musician, I have liberally supplied "how to play" as the object of "forget" (cf. KJV "Let my right hand forget her cunning" and TEV "May I never be able to play the harp again."
Verse 7

The "day of Jerusalem," i.e., the day of Jerusalem's fall to the Babylonians in 587 B.C.E.

Verse 8

haššědûdāh, a passive participle, literally, "the destroyed, devastated." Many translators have read an active participle here (e.g., NEB "the destroyer;" NRSV "you devastator") following certain Greek manuscripts. I have followed Freedman who argues that because words built from the root *šdd* are used elsewhere exclusively of action to be taken *against* Babylon and never *by* Babylon, "it is better to accept the MT here and interpret the reference as a proleptic statement of the irreversible fate already determined and soon to be accomplished .... In other words, Babylon is destined for and doomed to destruction" (Freedman 1971:202–203).

Psalm 137 is not easily classified according to the traditional schema set forth by form critics like Gunkel and Westermann (cf. Westermann 1980). Its theme and content suggest it is a national or community lament; its structure, however, does not conform to the observed pattern of lament psalms. There is no characteristic introductory petition (e.g., "How long, O LORD?"), no rehearsal of God's past saving acts, no rapid change of mood from complaint to praise. There are, however, elements of poignant lamentation and uninhibited petition which make it difficult for us to view this psalm as anything but lament.

Kraus has created a broader category of what he calls "community prayer songs" into which Psalm 137 naturally falls (cf. Kraus 1988:47–56). Even so, there is the recognition by Kraus that Psalm 137 shares certain language and features with the songs of Zion (Kraus 1988:50). Allen goes so far as to say that Psalm 137 is itself one of the Zion songs, though a modified version (Allen 1983:241).

However it is finally categorized, Psalm 137 is, in a quite literal sense, a psalm of dislocation.[2] It expresses the grief and

[2] Brueggemann's notion of "disorientation" corresponds to "dislocation" in Ricoeur's taxonomy (See Brueggemann 1984:74–77).

consequent rage of the people of Israel associated with their experience of exile in Babylon. It is the response of a people in socio-political and theological crisis. Nevertheless, it is a response of faith and of expectant hope that God will respond to their cry for divine justice.

The structure of Psalm 137 is fairly straightforward. Verses 1–4 contain an expression of lament, verses 5–6 a hymnic vow of faithfulness and verses 7–9 a prayer for vengeance. The nature of the verbs makes it somewhat difficult to determine the exact setting of the psalm. The use of the perfect tense in vv.1–3 suggests that the psalmist is looking back on the experience of captivity rather than undergoing it currently. The repetition of *šam* ("there") also supports this. However, the use of the imperfect in vv.5—6, as well as the nature of the vow itself ("If I forget you, O Jerusalem ... "), give the impression that the psalmist is indeed composing the piece from a foreign land. It is unclear, then, whether the setting for Psalm 137 is exilic or post-exilic.

The use of the passive participle *haššědûdāh* describing Babylon as already "destroyed" in v.8 further complicates the matter. Is the psalmist sitting in Babylon calling on God to take vengeance on Israel's subjugators, or is the psalmist back home in Israel after the Babylonians have themselves been subjugated by the Medes? If it is the latter case, why would the psalmist pray for revenge which had already been enacted? These questions cannot be answered with certainty and will have to remain in abeyance. Whatever the exact setting may have been, it is clearly the experience of exile which gives rise to the psalmist's complaint, vow and petition.

Psalm 137 begins with a poignant description of life for the people of Israel, carried off as the spoil of war to a location somewhere between the Tigris and the Euphrates. Immediately the language of the text draws us up into the feelings of anguish and emotional exhaustion that accompany the experience of loss. For the exilic community this no doubt would have included loss of homes, possessions, established vocations, personal control and—

perhaps most significantly according to the account of the psalmist—a sense of national and religious identity.

> By the rivers of Babylon
> there we sat down and wept
> when we remembered *Zion*. (v.1)

Only to compound their anguish is the taunting of their captors. It is the type of jeering that has been recorded elsewhere in the community's laments.

> We have become a taunt to our neighbors,
> mocked and derided by those around us ... .
> Why should the nations say,
> "Where is their God?" (Ps. 79:4, 10a, NRSV)

The implication of such mocking is that Israel's God has been defeated and rendered powerless to save. The people of Yahweh have been left utterly abandoned. "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" they jeered. For the singers and musicians in the company of the psalmist, there was only one appropriate response.

> On the poplar trees in her midst
> there we hung up our lyres ...
> How could we sing
> the LORD's song
> in a foreign land? (vv. 2, 4)

But the failure to comply with the contemptuous requests of their captors does not mean that all hope in Yahweh's power to deliver and restore the people to their land has been abandoned. The memory of Zion remains always in view, and the psalmist vows to keep it there.

> If I forget you, O Jerusalem,

let my right hand forget how to play,
let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth
if I do not remember you,
if I do not set Jerusalem
above my highest joy. (vv. 5–6)

The psalmist vows never to become too comfortable in Babylon, nor to identify too closely with the Babylonian people or their gods. Yahweh has promised to establish a throne in Jerusalem forever, and this promise will not be forgotten.

At this point it is critical to note that undergirding Psalm 137 from start to finish is the imperial theology which was developed in Israel during the monarchy and given expression (among other places) in the songs of Zion. These Zion psalms (46, 48, 76, 84, 87, 122, and 132) celebrate Yahweh's choice of David as king and Jerusalem as the divine city of residence. The presence of the deity with the people insures their security and the city's protection. Among the recurring motifs are a description of Jerusalem set upon a high mountain (e.g., "beautiful in elevation," Ps. 48:2) and beside flowing water ("There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God," Ps. 46:4).

In addition to these topographical motifs, there are others which describe the security of the city. Since Yahweh is victorious over all enemies who would seek to do it harm ("His abode has been established in Salem / his dwelling place in Zion. / There he broke the flashing arrows / the shield, the sword and the weapons of war" Ps. 76:2–3), what results is unprecedented international peace ("He makes wars cease to the end of the earth / he breaks the bow and shatters the spear, / he burns the shields with fire" Ps. 46:9).

Finally, the Zion psalms speak of the implications of Yahweh's righteous reign for the inhabitants of Jerusalem themselves. As God is righteous, so the people of God must be righteous ("Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? / And who shall stand in his holy place? / Those who have clean hands and pure hearts /

who do not lift up their souls to what is false / and do not swear deceitfully," Ps. 24:3–4). This being so, those who dwell in Jerusalem will surely enjoy abundant life ("Happy are those who live in your house / ever singing your praise. / Happy are those whose strength is in you / in whose heart are the highways to Zion ... / No good thing does the LORD withhold / from those who walk uprightly. / O LORD of hosts / happy is everyone who trusts in you" Ps. 84:4–5, 11–12).

The implications of Zion theology for the exilic community are two-fold. First, if Zion is the city of God, then the destruction of the city suggests (at least on the surface) a defeat of Yahweh. Second, the enemies of Israel are consequently understood to be the enemies of God (and vice-versa). Any aggressive attack on the people is interpreted as an aggressive attack on the deity. Any act of retribution, then, would not only serve to avenge the people of Israel, but Yahweh as well. With this thought in mind, the psalmist turns to God in urgent prayer.

> Remember, O LORD,
> the day of Jerusalem
> to the children of Edom,
> those who said, "Tear it down! Tear it down!
> Down to its foundation!" (v.7)

Having vowed to remember the city of Jerusalem and hope for what it may yet again be, the psalmist now appeals to God to remember what it has become at the hands of the Edomites. The Edomites are implicated here, together with the Babylonians, for their role in plundering the city. Obadiah 10–14 cites the children of Esau (Edom) for standing aside and gloating, rejoicing over the calamity of their brother Jacob (cf. Ogden 1982). The psalmist continues,

> O daughter of Babylon, doomed to destruction,
> happy is the one who repays you in kind

what you have done to us,
happy is the one who takes your children
and smashes them against the rock! (vv.8–9)

Cloaked in this grisly imagery is the plea that God would remember Jerusalem and act to avenge its devastation at the hands of the Babylonians. More than Israel's well-being is at stake; Yahweh's reputation among the nations as the great King above all gods must be restored.

In these final verses, the psalmist appropriates the beatitude formula used elsewhere in the Zion psalms in order to achieve an ironic end. Those who sardonically requested a song of Zion will get one, only with a twist. The blessing customarily associated with those who dwell in Jerusalem is here turned into a curse upon those who have destroyed it. With the aid of literary convention, the psalmist effectively pronounces a blessing on any and all who would participate with Yahweh in implementing divine retribution.

Inherent in the psalmist's world view is the Israelite notion that the purposes of God are generally worked out through human agency. The exile itself was proclaimed by the prophets as God's use of the Chaldeans in order to bring judgment on Israel. As Kraus explains,

> Under Yahweh's wrath the people of the covenant, the chosen people, were defeated and crushed (Ps. 60:1). Thus the enemies have been the executors of a historical judgment which Yahweh has pronounced. They mete out to God's people the suffering which it was theirs to bear.

"Yet," he adds,

> wherever the ambitions of the hostile powers are voiced, the enemies of the people become Yahweh's enemies (Ps. 83:2). It is Yahweh's land that the opponents wished to

> conquer (Ps. 83:12). The war which they wage and the oppressive might with which they rule are directed ultimately against Yahweh himself. This ... enables them to pray that Yahweh would intervene for the sake of his own name and his honor.

Under the circumstances, he concludes, "even the revenge motif has its place" (Kraus 1986:127). That is, in light of the psalmist's theological convictions, the prayer for vengeance from the exilic community may not be as shocking and morally indefensible as at first blush.

From our initial exegesis of the text and attempted historical reconstruction of the circumstances which first gave rise to it, we may draw the following conclusions: Psalm 137 is a psalm of dislocation, a community lament occasioned by the experience of exile. Undergirding the psalm is the language and imagery of Israel's Zion theology as it is expressed elsewhere in the songs of Zion. Themes dominating a world view shaped by this theology are God's election of Israel and promise of an eternal covenant with the house of David, and God's identification with the people and in particular with the city of Jerusalem. Because the fall of Judah to the Babylonians was interpreted not only as a defeat of the people but of Yahweh their God, it is apparent that the prayer in vv.8–9 is at once a prayer for revenge and a prayer for divine justice. The psalmist's nationalist fervor is bound up together with a zeal for the Lord of hosts.

WHAT IT MEANT AND WHAT IT MEANS

The results of our critical work to this point, however, have not brought us much closer to hearing the claim of this text on our lives today. We have succeeded only in determining what it may have meant to those who would have heard it in its original context. It is impossible for us simply to "translate" this meaning into our present situation since we know that the historical and cultural distance between ourselves and those initial hearers is staggering.

For instance, ours is not a society in which nations and people groups are identified so closely with their religious traditions that all historical and political events are interpreted as actions originating with or impacting the lives of the gods. Nor is ours a society in which the type of violent retribution called for by the psalmist is easily tolerated.

But just as striking as the historical and cultural distance we experience between our world and the ancient world is the theological distance we experience between ourselves and the psalmist. For the Christian community, the Zion theology informing Psalm 137 has been largely displaced by New Testament constructions of Christology. For example, with the incarnation of Christ, God's dwelling place can no longer be associated with Jerusalem. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us ... full of grace and truth" (John 1:14). In addition, the Davidic covenant has been replaced by the new covenant in Christ's blood, "poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins" (Matthew 26:28). Furthermore, God's promise to place a king on the throne of David forever has been enacted, once and for all. Jesus Christ "must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet" (I Corinthians 15:25).

But there is another, perhaps more obvious, theological problem for us. How can we reconcile this Old Testament prayer for vengeance with the ethical instruction of the New Testament? In Paul we read,

> Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them ... . Do not repay anyone evil for evil, but take thought for what is noble in the sight of all ... . Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." No, "if your enemies are hungry, feed them; if they are thirsty, give them something to drink; for by doing this you will heap burning coals on their heads." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:14, 17, 19–21)

Surely it is at this point that Psalm 137 presents us with its greatest difficulty. In light of this paraenetic material, the psalmist appears not only pre-Christian but decidedly *un*christian. This is undoubtedly the reason the Church has knocked it from the pulpit with a preemptive strike.

A QUESTION OF GENRE

To eliminate Psalm 137 from the working canon of Scripture on these grounds, however, is a mistake. There is without question a disparity between this text and the Sermon on the Mount or the didactic portions of the Pauline epistles. But this should not trouble us. Psalm 137 is precisely that, a psalm. It is a song, a poem. It is not a treatise on ethical behavior in the community of the elect. It does not claim to be. It is a lament. Its language is the language of prayer. Psalm 137 is honest, open, authentic communication between an aggrieved people and their God. To treat it as anything else is to make a serious genre error.

Inherent in the treatment of this psalm by most preachers (and hymnal editors and lectionary committees) is the assumption that "all biblical texts are created equal." That is, every text, by virtue of the fact that it exists in Scripture, performs the same authoritative function. Charles Wood has shown that a text's inclusion in the canon of Scripture does not mean that it can or should be treated in exactly the same way as every (or any) other text. This is especially important in the case of Psalm 137. We must not simply know the tradition, we must know *how to read* (cf. Luke 10:26). How, then, are we to read Psalm 137 in the Christian community today?

Perhaps more than anything else, this psalm functions to validate the expression of human emotion. It offers us insights into the psychodynamics of grief, and the complex interrelationship of hurt and anger. For example, we notice in the text that the expression of rage in the prayer for vengeance does not exist in a vacuum. It is set in the context of weeping (v. 1). The

pain of dislocation and the dehumanization of exile have the first word. In this psalm the revenge is inextricably tied to the lament.

A contemporary example confirms this insight. The following are lyrics to a song written by Canadian recording artist Bruce Cockburn when touring Central America in 1983.

> Here comes the helicopter—second time today
> Everybody scatters and hopes it goes away
> How many kids they've murdered only God can say
> If I had a rocket launcher ... I'd make somebody pay
>
> I don't believe in guarded borders and I don't believe in hate
> I don't believe in generals or their stinking torture states
> And when I talk with the survivors of things too sickening to relate
> If I had a rocket launcher ... I would retaliate
>
> On the Rio Lacantun one hundred thousand wait
> To fall down from starvation—or some less humane fate
> Cry for Guatemala, with a corpse in every gate
> If I had a rocket launcher ... I would not hesitate
>
> I want to raise every voice—at least I've got to try
> Every time I think about it water rises to my eyes
> Situation desperate echoes of the victim's cry
> If I had a rocket launcher ... some sonofabitch would die
> (Cockburn 1984)

The interconnection between grief and rage is apparent throughout, but no more so than in this final stanza. It is through eyes filled with tears that the most aggressive strike is envisioned.

Like Psalm 137, this song grew out of an experience of suffering, though the suffering here is experienced only indirectly. The raw, unmitigated violence contemplated by the songwriter is

an expression of hostility rooted in anguish over the devastating effects of human cruelty. And like Psalm 137, this song has been subjected to censorship by those who have found it offensive. In fact, when it was first released nearly ten years ago, only a few self-proclaimed counter-cultural radio stations would give it air play. Others begged off, presumably because of the profanity and violent imagery. The artist himself began to make disclaimers when performing live; he wasn't advocating that we go out and kill anybody, it was just the way he felt when he wrote the song. It seemed that instructions for listening were necessary.

How we will listen was the central issue in another, more recent, controversy. In the Spring of 1992, a recording was released by black rap artist Ice-T entitled, "Cop Killer." With lyrics such as

> I got my 12-gauge sawed off
> I got my headlights turned off
> I'm 'bout to bust some shots off
> I'm 'bout to dust some cops off
> Die, die, die, pig, die!

the song inspired fear among law enforcement officers and others, particularly in the wake of the Rodney King verdict and the Los Angeles riots. Pressure was put on Time/Warner, Inc. to censor the record it produced, which it eventually did in early August of that year. At the center of this controversy stood the problem of hermeneutics. In an interview with Rolling Stone magazine, Ice-T offered his own interpretation of the work.

> This album's mentality is a progressive mentality against racism. It's hate against hate, you know. It's anger. It's not necessarily answers, it's anger with the same force of their hate. It scares them when they see it kicked back at them ... . It's impossible for somebody who doesn't live it to understand it ... . If you ain't been f—— over by the

> police, you can't have the same hatred, and if you're looking to understand the anger in the voice of the rapper, you never will unless you live it. And then if you live it, it doesn't seem as angry. (Anon. 1992:30)

And when asked, "Point blank, does this record condone or glorify killing cops?"

> No. The way the record could pose a threat would have been if the lyrics had been "Let's go cop killing, let's all go cop killing. Let's put our s— on, let's all go out tonight and do it." That's obvious, right? But I didn't say that. I could have written the record like that, but I said, "No." (Anon. 1992:31)

"Cop Killer," according to Ice-T, is an expression of the rage he and his community have felt as a result of the sustained experience of police-on-black brutality. It is possible to interpret the lyrics as instruction for how to respond to that experience of every day life, but to do so would be to misread the text. In this final quote, we see Ice-T himself wrestling to describe the difference between language that could be construed as promoting a certain behavior (a straightforward, "let's go cop killing") and the poetic language of rap. As in the case of Psalm 137, too many listeners have failed to hear the difference between poetry and prose. In all of our interpretive work we must pay attention to the literary cues available to us, genre being first among them.

MOVING TOWARD THE SERMON

Returning now from our foray into the world of rap music, we must come again to the question of how Psalm 137 might function in the life of the Church today. Using Charles Wood's terminology, we may want to say that Psalm 137 functions as "source" but not "canon" for us. That is, through it we gain access to a particular moment in the community's tradition, but it should not be

recognized as normative for Christian faith and practice. The question then remains, should only those texts which are expressive of the canonical sense of Scripture be preached? My answer is a qualified "no." Only if moralizing were the aim of all preaching would we want to suggest that only texts that perform a norming function belong in the pulpit.

At the same time, Psalm 137 does not have a place in the pulpit every week. It is not normative for Christian faith and practice, and it should not be represented as such. However, there are occasions in the life of the community of faith on which this text may speak a timely word. There are moments when the mouths of people who know about mercy and grace would form the words of a prayer for vengeance; when, for example, the enemy is not the Edomites or the Babylonians, but cancer or AIDS. This text may also speak to the experience of a community which has been dehumanized by racism, classism, or sexism; when the collective hurt gives way to boiling hot rage, and the only recourse is a cry for divine judgment. It is also possible that for those who have not experienced a life characterized by suffering or grief, this text may function to provide a window on the world of those who have. In such a case, the graphic language of Psalm 137 could deepen not our horror, but our empathy and solidarity with the ones who have made it their prayer. In short, when this text is read and preached in the context of worship, the community of faith is invited to respond to God not only with its thanks and praise, but with its hurt and anger, its doubt and despair as well.

THE WITNESS OF THE CANON

Psalm 137 is correctly located on the margins of the canon. Nevertheless, its inclusion in the canon at all bears witness to the value placed by the community of faith on hearing even the voices of the marginalized. These voices must continue to be heard in the Church today.

What we must remember, however, is that the voice we hear in Psalm 137 does not stand alone. It is part of the unity of

the canon and must be heard in concert with the other voices that compose it. For this reason, it is important that we read the Bible *intertextually*, that is, that we allow texts to read and speak to one another (cf. Scholes 1989). One way in which texts suggest themselves for mutual interpretation is through the echo of language.

A strong echo of Psalm 137 is heard in the book of Revelation. In the final chapters we encounter a series of oracles against Babylon. They, too, seem to be in response to the call for divine justice.

> Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great!
> ... for her sins are heaped high as heaven,
> and God has remembered her iniquities.
> Render to her as she herself has rendered,
> and repay her double for her deeds,
> mix a double drought for her
> in the cup she mixed ....
> Rejoice over her, O heaven,
> you saints and apostles and prophets!
> For God has given judgment for you against her.
> (Revelation 18:2, 5–6, 20)

While any precise meaning of these texts may be hidden from us, it is clear that in this vision of the future the vengeance sought by the psalmist will be meted out. Babylon is repaid not according to what she has done to others, but double! Moreover, the judgment rendered against her is final. The association of Psalm 137 with these texts from Revelation affords us the possibility of understanding it in conjunction with the eschatological hopes of the people of God.

The same imperial theology which fueled the Zion songs of the Old Testament is also the source for this later apocalyptic vision of peace, hope and eternal life in the kingdom of God.

> Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea

was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God ... . And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

"See, the home of God is among mortals.
He will dwell with them as their God;
they will be his peoples,
and God himself will be with them;
he will wipe every tear from their eyes.
Death will be no more;
mourning and crying and pain will be no more,
for the first things have passed away."

(Revelation 21:1–4)

It is here, in this vision of God's kingdom come, that the weeping of the exiles in Babylon, their grief and rage and longing for Jerusalem all find their resolution. It is this vision of the new Jerusalem that we, like the psalmist, must vow to remember. For it is only by remembering that there will one day be justice and a setting right of all that has gone wrong that we will be able to withstand the present sufferings of our world. These are the lyrics to the new song of Zion. Let us keep them continually on our lips.

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On Being "Doubled":

Soteriology at the White End of Black Signifyin(g)

JIM PERKINSON

> The [theologians] and [clergy] tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable *against them*.
> (Luke 20:19–20)

THE QUESTION PURSUED IN THIS ESSAY AS BOTH A CHALLENGE and an invitation addressed to white theology was first explicitly issued (in this author's awareness) by African-American theologian Will Coleman in an April 1993 article entitled "Tribal Talk: Black Theology in Postmodern Configurations" (Coleman 1993:68–77). (Implicitly, however, this challenge is and always has been the very meaning of Black Theology for white theology). It occurs there in the cryptic but provocative form of a deftly placed question mark in the last sentence of an article otherwise concerned largely with matters "internal" to the black theological enterprize. Coleman writes, "If, in a pluralistic context, so-called

white people (?) can learn from the tribal talk of others, perhaps there will be no further need for that agonizing colon that separates their respective realities" (Coleman 1993:77). The very economy of the remark concentrates its critical power.

Coleman is concerned in this essay to "grasp the ways in which African-American people have anticipated postmodernity" by "making sense of their fragmented reality" in a situation of European domination (Coleman 1993:76). He has deployed an "agonizing colon" between "various informal and formal lead phrases" that appear throughout his essay to try to signal a black difference-from-Europe (for instance, he begins section four with *Talking with Other People of Color: The Globalization of Black Theology* and section five with *Learning from the Stories of African Women: The Significance of Womanist Theology*). The punctuation here is made to "signif[y] the indispensable bi-linguisticality (and bi-culturality) that African-Americans have had to appropriate in order to survive under the ideology of an alleged white superiority" (Coleman 1993:76). For Coleman, the colon's break-up of each lead phrase into two unequal parts marks a profound historical bifurcation. Centuries of "agonized doubling" are compressed into two little dots as signs of a black experience continually squeezed out of significance in the public eye of white North America. And the "pointed" subtlety of this grammatical intervention can then be taken as the implicit hermeneutical key to the encrypting parentheses of Coleman's explicit question mark concerning whites.

Coleman's denotation "white people (?)," I submit, must be grasped as a simple but surreptitiously profound cipher of *the* racial question in North America. It stands as a kind of post-modern "polyquiry" with piquant political bite—a questioning of whiteness on many levels simultaneously that poses its challenge out of a bi-valent blackness moving in the direction of multiple speech-competencies. Blackness has always been more than "mere" blackness. It has had to become capable of speaking to more than one racial community at a time. What remains in ques-

tion is the "whiteness" of whites and their cross-cultural competence (or lack thereof)—and that as an issue of theology.

What follows is a white attempt to submit to the surreptition of this questioning and to address its supposed concerns.[1] Though not originally written with the "Tribal Talk" article in view (but nonethelss, written for the same American Academy of Religion section on "Black Theology and African-American Literary Criticism" that hosted a hearing of Coleman's concerns in that article), it can be read retroactively as a white theological response to the challenge of black bi-culturality issued by Coleman.

PRESCRIPT

If Mikhail Bakhtin is right, "I" who write in this space as a subject of discourse am ever the product of a double-voiced dialogic, a twoness that is a mixture of voices and duplicity of meaning (Bakhtin 1981:275–300). My speech is ever a response, a second word to what has worded me, a moment of author-ship constituted as a power of resistence deriving from and thus depending upon the forces author-ing it. What follows is an investigation of this double-voiced dialogic of identity-in-the-making in all of its peculiar historical permutations as the compound social fracture that is race in North America today.

Generally, I want to argue that this social fracture demands critical response from any theology claiming authenticity as North American. Specifically, I want to suggest that it demands of any *white* theology—responsible *to* the charge of racism and thus responsible *for* its inevitable positioning within power—an account of its own color-anonymity as a power of injustice. It asks, that is,

[1] And taking this "black" claim to multiple speech competencies seriously as a white means for me, at least, willingness to experiment with more than one voice or style in the very attempt to discuss black polyvocality. Thus, in what follows, I do not remain strictly didactic, but risk the anecdotal and the poetic as a way of attempting to "open" up my own writing to the influence of black creative strategies.

for a white word about God that is finally *self-confessedly white* and thus nonuniversal and at the same time, *impurely and interdependently white* and thus incapable of achieving its own wholeness apart from interaction with other racial groups. Such a whiteness may be singularly envisioned in consciousness, but it is already (or at least so I shall argue) doubly constituted in fact.

And given such a concern, it is not Bakhtin, but W. E. B. DuBois who will best supply our theoretical focus in what follows. His 1903 exegesis of African-American "double-consciousness" as a form of imposed violence will provide a phenomenological outline of racialization cogent for theological evaluation. But it is expedient first both to contextualize the issue and to situate my own experience vis à vis my argument.

THE STAKES

If North American "whiteness" is ever to become merely one color among others—one racio-cultural matrix of identity in co-operative interaction within the multi-culture that North America already is (and always has been)—its position as dominant and its self-understanding as "pure" must be undone. And, thank God, such is happening—though through no generosity of its own. The hegemonic white body that operates within the *mythos* of North America as its ever-elusive self-image and normative style, its *habitus* and taken-for-grantedness, is gradually being shattered by various eruptions of color and contrast and brought out into the open of ideological conflict and combat (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:19–32). I merely wish as a white Christian to co-operate with what I judge to be a historical action of the Spirit—which accounts for the preoccupation of this particular writing.

It is also important to indicate up front that I will speak of "whiteness" in what follows somewhat monolithically—a whiteness that operates as an unmarked racial position of dominating power. It is a whiteness that is not co-extensive with white *people*,

nor descriptive of the totality of their behavior, nor reflective of their differing subject positions or suffering of various other kinds of oppressions. It is only significant of whiteness as a *racialized whiteness,* operating *as such.* It is obviously crosscut by all kinds of other power configurations such as sexism and classism, but remains a violence of racial privilege that no white person ever entirely escapes from participating in and embodying.

Tracing out a full itinerary of what a salvific undoing of whiteness might mean for a white theology concerned about race in North America lies beyond the scope of this writing. Rather, I will focus in what follows on only one small piece of the task—one, indeed, that is by no means of greatest import, but is nonetheless specific to theology as a discursive discipline. I want to focus on a question of *rhetorical tactics* (De Certeau 1984:29–44). What is ultimately at stake, however, goes far beyond that merely discursive issue, and indeed, forms its only valid *raison d'etre.*

What is ultimately at issue for whites is taking sides in a fight that costs money, causes breakdowns, leaves physical scars and screams more often over bleeding bodies in the street than a dead one painted behind the altar. As James Cone argued 18 years ago in *God of the Oppressed,* sympathy matters little, linguistic formulation even less, absent a negotiation of respective social *a prioris* (Cone 1975:94). Not just theological content, but sociological context and political combativeness are at issue (Cone 1975:51, 101).

And in fact in my own life, co-operation with the rising Spirit of color has meant, among other things, 15 years of committed involvement living in the inner city of Detroit and working in various multiracial/multiclass co-operative structures addressing the needs of a devasted, low-income, pre-dominantly black neighborhood that was home for me.

But even so, even after such a politically committed lifestyle, I find it imperative to confess that I as a white have not thereby been exempted from suspicion, suddenly exculpated from responsibility for the privilege of my (white) position. Rather, I

remain "in question," needing again and again to be put at issue if I am to be kept at all vigilant against my own ingrained presumptions to normativity and superiority.

Indeed, I want to argue that it is the very inability to eradicate this "being put at issue" that constitutes the critical condition of white theology's relationship to Black Theology. In the quality of its response, white theology reveals the maturity—or lack thereof—of its vision of racial justice.

EVEN IN THE BRIEFEST OF ENCOUNTERS ...

Tellingly enough, for me personally the question was brought home most forcefully not in the urban center (where it was virtually ever-present and therefore unremarkable), but in a quite prosaic encounter that occured only recently in the cloistered setting of a predominantly white university. In the fall of 1991, while I was functioning as a teaching assistant at the University of Chicago, I discovered that an African-American student of mine and I had a common background. We both had lived all of our adult lives in the Detroit "ghetto"—she because she was born there, and I because I had moved there to join a tiny activist Christian community. In consequence, over the initial weeks of that fall quarter, Jackie (we'll call her for the sake of anonymity) and I became at one level, friendly.

Among other things, our friendliness initially translated into a willingness on my part to read Jackie's first set of reflection papers in manuscript form rather than insisting on a typewritten format (she did not own a typewriter). But the indulgence quickly overtaxed my nearsightedness and my patience, and on the second set of papers, I had scribbled back in reply something about her needing to get used to more "formal grad school procedures" and become more disciplined in the organization of her reflections. When she next discovered me, in the basement of the Divinity School, she walked up with my written comments in her hand, and said, with a hardness in her eye and a sharpness in her voice, "You know Jim, I have German blood in me, too!"—and

immediately walked away. I spluttered after her in confusion and followed her for a few steps, whereupon she suddenly wheeled about, embraced me and said, warmly this time, but with knowing smile, "I love you, brother"—and again walked away. I was left standing there, faced with the incongruity and elusiveness of her two responses, internally wrestling with the meaning of her eyes presiding over and inflecting her words.

I was Ieft struggling, that is, with *irony*—with "me" at the receiving end. It was offered—*if* I wanted it—as a *possible* form of relationship between us. But in any case, for Jackie, it was an irony that leveled the playing field. It very simply, but very deftly, carved out a space of uncertainty in our interaction, "underneath" the words, where she could stand with dignity and power before the impossibility of my "German" gaze and judgement.

The raw edges of our encounter marked, indeed, a mere scratch on the social body of North America—a tiny "cut," but one whose depths opened out as wide as the country itself and stretched back behind even its beginings. It was a small rupture ... marking a huge unhealed wound. Beyond all intentionality and in spite of my inner city history and commitments, "I" could *not but* stand in as "white male authority," The Law, The Man. And "she" could *not but* find herself positioned as "black," as woman, "at the mercy of." Yes, my requirements of her were appropriate for a graduate school context. But yes, also, those protocols were culturally defined and limited as largely Euro-centric. And yes, she might be "playing" me by means of the "race card"—but it was still a "play" I needed to learn how to play in return, recognizing my own relativity as a human being.

Thus I was confronted with the "dare" of irony. Jackie's gesture constituted a simultaneous confounding and re-configuring of relationship, *on her terms*, even though on "my" turf. This moment of "signification" (cf. Henry Louis Gates, Jr.'s *Signifying Monkey* discussed later in this paper)—initiated across the divide and conjuncture of skin as history—recast the calculus of power

between us. What had been a seemingly simple exercise of "office" on my part as teaching assistant suddenly waxed slippery. Her single sentence and hard gaze revised the possibilities of my control in the direction of a duplicity of potential meanings—as much subject to her manipulation as my own. In the flick of an eyebrow, a "scene of authority" had been reconstituted as a "forum of reciprocity." I could, if I so chose, join her in that space of ironic uncertainty and as a peer *learn the play of meaning*. Or I could back away in a gesture that did not respond in kind, but only reconsolidated the hierarchy, thus fixing her within "my" meaning, but leaving me shut out from her "truth," carefully concealed in the opaqueness of her own utterance and conserved there as untouchable dignity.

It was a double option—an option to be doubled. Jackie and I were inescapably (how could it be otherwise?) enmeshed in all the contradictions of three hundred and fifty years of racialization. Black and white in this country are "always already" tangled up in a complex cultural structure of inherited meanings and positions. The only alternative to ever-renewed repetitions of a fictitious superiority attended by ever-deepening suspicion and escalating violence is the risk of "real" exchange and co-interpretation. Our practical and personal choices, if not our history and our future together, seem clear.

WHITENESS AS A THEOLOGICAL QUESTION

My question, then, as a white, is simple, even if profound and painful. What does it mean for me (as for any other "white" person) to be at the *raw end* of a trope in North America today, to be the object of irony, to be signfied-upon—not only as a question of communication, but as an issue of salvation?

What does it mean for me—in my whiteness and as a white—to be put in question in the deepest theological sense possible? On the one hand, what is the theological significance of my being identified on urban terrain as the *embodiment of injustice* (as I frequently am when I walk down my street in inner city Detroit

and a young black male new to the neighborhood spits in the gutter as he passes by me walking the other direction)? On the other hand, what is the theological import of the semantic mobilization of my whiteness in the dominant lexis of race (albeit against my will) as an *alibi for accumulation*—a "little white lie" masking, in the violent circuits of global capitalism, someone else's real physical death? What can it mean for my white skin to exist as an "excuse" for the bodily suffering and death of people of color around the globe, a deathly violence that must first and always be carried out in language, before it is carried out physically, if that global circuitry is to maintain itself as a system of accumulation and privilege?

These questions emerge—for me, at least—out of a growing appreciation for the interconnectedness of things that appear to be unrelated opposites in the logic of our culture-codes. True to our postmodern facility with facade, racism itself today has developed "newspeak" capacities for simultaneously masking and sharpening its virulence.

On the one hand, the "killing fields" of our urban interiors—whole zones of terror and trauma, where violence prepared by state policy and permutated by corporate greed is carried out by local powerbrokers on both sides of the law—are unwittingly "pre-ordained" by our everyday speech. (Cryptic gospel warnings to the effect that the mere name 'fool,' muttered under the breath, can kill, take on renewed relevance here.) Euphemistic media-terms like "urban," "city," "south side," "South Central," "barrio" and "ghetto" line up alongside "gulf" and "southern hemisphere" as linguistic license for batons and bullets and ballistics claiming their capricious due with impunity. These varied geographies begin to carry an implicit public connotation of "militarized zones." We would not be far off the mark then to claim that "bodies of color," whatever other meanings they may conjure in North America, are discursively *constructed* in the public imagination as "violable." Violence is tacitly accepted, in the common sense of our society, as the "natural" habitat and "taken for granted" venue of existence of people who are not white.

On the other hand—and as an implicit correlative to the above—"whiteness" signals a presumption of security and a privilege of property (Harris 1993:1). The social body of whiteness, without speaking a word or lifting a hand, convenes, unseen, but not unfelt, a space of exemption, a region of protection, and a presumed right to the profits of political economy—a body that, at least in its suburban realizations, is surrounded invariably by the "thin blue line" of Simi Valley fame. "White" as a counter-code to "black" is far from innocent in its presumed field of reference.

But if such is indeed the case, what can such a "whiteness" signify, today, in the context of *religious* discourse? Particularly, what can it signify *for a religion like Christianity* that worships at the feet of a bloody corporeality, dripping its destiny at the wrong end of imperial sanctions, a punctured body rising out of a grave sealed with the state imprimateur and thus illegally transgressing social space even in the very act of resurrection? How do we articulate "whiteness," that is, in terms of Christian *theology*?

As a basic first response, I am compelled to confess a theological understanding of my own North American whiteness as a "fiction of purity" and a "reality of power" that must—must!—be at risk in the final tallying up, already under suspicion—but furtive!—concealing itself from the crystalization of that accusation in the minds and on the tongues of those it has ravaged. Indeed, it comports as a *deceiving* whiteness, itself deceived before the significance of its own break-up, its own "eschatological" dismantling already imagined by its victims. (My friend Jackie, remember, managed both to deconstruct and to re-construct me outside of my white authority with a mere 11 words.)

As such, I comprehend whiteness theologically as the occasion of an implied and necessary *judgment*—one that for now is embodied primarily on the lips and in the imagination of people of color. But if there be justice, it is a judgment that must one day materialize itself as convincing and cold, as cold as the proud

posturing of white rule on the scene of history for long, long years of travail for people of color

My question, then, is simple. What kind of white body might make it through such a cold gaze of history's longsuffering countenance? What kind of altered significance would it have to carry and how might it be made to carry it? I cannot shed my skin, but perhaps it can learn to signify a different meaning—and accumulate a different kind of "capital"?

WHITENESS UNDER BLACK SUBVERSION

I want to argue that (such a) whiteness-already-under-eschatological-judgment confronts its own significance most poignantly in black rhetorical practices of ironic resistance. Historically, that resistance has been expressed as far back as slavery's savy soteriology of "stealing away to Jesus." As a white, I have to think long and deep whenever I dare sing that song. Within such a seemingly simple lyric, there lurks a profound posture of ironic "signification," a deceptive depth, a whole christology of stolenness—indeed, the quintessence of the oppressed using the oppressor's language to celebrate their own freedom. "Simple" slaves here trope the already doubled meaning of "steal away" into a *triple entendre*. By playing off its secondary significance of "quiet retreat" against its simple first meaning of blatant "stealing," they are able to sing boldly and brazenly exactly what shape salvation was taking for them in their social existence.

For slaves stolen from Africa, Jesus paradoxically was available only under the rubric of robbery. He was someone who must be "stolen away to"—in an action that was almost the inverse of his own coming like a "thief in the night." This Jesus was one who not only licensed looting for survival's sake in certain situations, but under the constrained conditions of slavery actually *required* it, if the slave was to grow in faith. Not only was this a Jesus who, in effect, had been himself stolen from the pages of the New Testament and transported to the New World under

duress and in false guise by *conquistadores* and colonists to serve as an ideological legitimation for an unjust economic interest; he was also one whose way of discipleship once he "got here" was so hemmed in by the colonial criminal codes (it was illegal in many places to "Christianize" slaves) that Christianity could be effectively maintained in some Southern areas as a "whites-only" religion. In a very real sense, for African-Americans to become Christian followers of Jesus at all under the conditions of North American slavery, they had first to "steal" the authentic messiah away from a perverse, white, slave-owning christology and then steal *themselves* back out of an equally perverse white anthropology of blackness. In the New World, if one were "black" and thus mere "property," the only possible way to *get to* Jesus was a double act of theft! Steal away ... maybe even as far as the Mason-Dixon line. But in any case, "stealing" here was the risk, sometimes even the form, of discipleship. Ironic duplicity was its necessary mode of faithful expression.

Indeed, "stealing away to Jesus" was a mode of faith that marks a specifically "black" means of saving grace. *Whites* couldn't—and can't—steal away to Jesus: they would have had to steal themselves from ... themselves! No, we (who are white) have needed outside intervention. We need to be *stolen upon* by grace, to have some part of our (white) selves taken out of the economy of accumulating whiteness and put into a different circulation of being and becoming. Whiteness is faced with its own "dark" (!) side here not only as that which must be put at issue rhetorically, but even as that which must be acted against, politically and economically.

"Stealing away to Jesus" in fact marks a way of salvation that finds its historical articulation as early as Mark's "messianic secret" and its contemporary meaning as recently as Public Enemy's "Who Stole the Soul?" For a world gone awry in substance and significance, salvation is necessarily surreptitious. It is never what it seems—a God who is human, a Christ who is criminal, followers who are failures, and Greeks who are Jews

(Romans 2:28–29). It ever labors towards a redistribution of goods and goodness—away from haves and towards have-nots—in the name of an Ultimate Justice that nevertheless is often enough labelled in the dominant discourse as "stealing," "lying," "blaspheming," and "defying." It is a saving grace that goes public in crisis, but often enough must operate covertly, by way of violation of the codes and meanings and legitimacies that sanction as merely "normal" the on-going rip-off of the many for the benefit of the few. In a racialized world, where black and white are locked in an economy of the "vulture," eviscerating the sweat and substance of the former for the engorgement of the latter, that codebreaking is "of the essence."

BLACKNESS AS A SOTERIOLOGICAL SIGN

In his 1975 publication, *God of the Oppressed*, James Cone articulated the christological import of this "salvation by surreptition" as implying a Jesus who is necessarily "black" (Cone 1975:134). For Cone, the racial scene in contemporary North America necessarily implies that *opacity* itself attains a christological value. Blackness here is integral to the very meaning of salvation at the level of race.

However, it is a blackness that does not carry a simple valence. Blackness necessarily has taken social shape in North America as, among other things, a survival strategy of no mean ability. Examined closely, it reveals itself existentially as a kind of complex contestation—from the "other" side of the racial divide—of the simplistic and sinful white-racist division of North America into black and white. It is a blackness that belies and decries that division as anything but simple. As such it forces us to look deeply into the socially constructed intersection of our color coordinates in this country.

"Blackness" in North America designates neither a uniformity of experience nor a singularity of vision. Rather, it expresses an experience of living that is as differentiated in its self-understanding as the self-identities arising out of the experi-

ences of any other ethnic or racial group. However, as also expressing a commonly suffered form of oppression, blackness in North America has been made to bear, in addition, an excess of meaning and has been forced to comprehend more than just its own will-to-live. As a form of opacity unceasingly imposed from without by the dominant white society, it necessarily encodes and articulates a violent collision of cultures.

In this latter capacity, blackness "speaks" not only of itself (as blackness), but simultaneously of the very whiteness for which it has been made to serve as negative "foil." Its witness here is "stereophonic": a richly nuanced and densely compacted articulation of the existential reality of racialization in this country, whose meaning can be grasped only if all of its overtones are appreciated, its undertones audited, its syncopated style given assent, its cadences "caught." Not surprisingly, then, *this* blackness is the "place" in our society where we who are white must look not only to grasp the meaning of racial violation, but also to catch sight of the very possibility of racial healing. Its rich and tortured complexity alone exhibits what is necessary for both blacks *and whites* in moving beyond the impasse of mere opposition.

In asserting such, I want to argue in what follows that Cone's christological blackness needs to be understood by whites in terms of W. E. B. DuBois's notion of *double-consciousness* and that when it is so understood, it actually points to a violence of disjunction *generic to this country at large* (DuBois 1961:17). I want to suggest that DuBois's description of a hyphenated "African-Americanity"—a blackness in which "two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings, two warring ideals" haunt "one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder"—in fact marks a doubleness that in some measure cuts across identity at every level (Chandler 1993:26–27). Its very hyphenation hints at the broader conditions of its labored creation.

In North America, blackness has ever been a blackness-won-out-of-whiteness. It has always been an existential

phenomenon constrained by white institutional violence—knowing first the bite of the slave whip and chain, then the circumscription of Jim Crow legistation and forced social separation, and today, the weight of economic dislocation and stereotypic cultural expectation. It has emerged keenly aware of its forced "hybridity," forged in the fires of a profound and irresistable conflict that has always been for it simultaneously exterior and interior. As such—as a "conflicted blackness" constituted out of the struggle with white imposition and exclusion day after day after day—it has become unavoidably savy about North America at large. It *knows* ineluctably what few whites have ever had to face with any real seriousness in this country: that the identity and self-consciousness of virtually every North American is unavoidably informed and deformed by the assumptions and dilemmas of "racialization."

In this view, North American racialization must be grasped as an oppressive *discursive formation* co-extensive with the country at large. "Race" emerges here as a taken-for-granted way of identifying people that "colors" the thinking and speaking of the entire nation. As a historical complex of beliefs, practices, and perceptions about the origins and characteristics of people, it so informs the common sense of the culture as to be virtually inescapable. As a set of categories with which people "see" and think before they even realize they are doing such, it operates as a form of cultural habit. It both constitutes and is constituted by the differentiating perceptions and actions of individuals as their "pre-existent" cultural matrix. As such, it constantly occurs and recurs as the fraught space of a racial signification affecting and effecting the identities of almost everyone. But if so, precisely how does it carry out its effects.

RACIAL OPPRESSION AS AN INTERLOCKING "DOUBLENESS"

I want to argue that the two racial signifiers "black" and "white" together coordinate a pervasive "field of perception" that organizes what is racially "thinkable" in North America. They

function as a kind of "discipline of sight" that determines what it is possible to see even *before* beginning to notice the particularities of what actually *is* seen (the "color" of any given human body). Together they define an interlocking doubleness of meaning that establishes the outside parameters of "race" and ethnicity" for every other identifiable group in the country.

"Racialized gaze" operates within this cultural field—within its preexistent possibilities *and limits* of meaning—not so much passively to recognize, as actively to *produce*, human bodies as already coded with social significance. It perceives any given human body as *already* bearing a specific racial meaning in the very first moment of perception. It does so in reference to a taken-for-granted continuum of possibilities marked out at its extremes as "white" at one end and "black" at the other. "New" bodies introducing themselves into this epistemologically "doubled" environment—newly arrived or newly emergent "ethnic groups of color"—are immediately positioned by the eye of race more or less closely to one or the other of these two poles.

Historically, this schema of racial oppression has tolerated—and even facilitated—profound shifts of perception within its taxonomic categories. In the nineteenth century, for instance, the Irish were comprehended as somewhat close to blacks, but gradually "ascended" the scale until roughly 1960, when they were infolded entirely within the ambit of whiteness with the election of Kennedy to the presidency. Indeed historically, the taxons themselves of the scheme—its various categories of possible meaning—can be observed to have been in constant flux in relationship to on-going changes in socio-political structures and cultural perceptions. For example, today we continue to take for granted that "yellow" skin implies a certain unspecified "Asian-ness" that is neither black nor white, but its presumed "orientality" obviously does not carry at all the same significance now as it did in 1945. The ending of World War II, the tragedy of Vietnam, the opening of China, the dilemma of "boat people," incessant immigration, the economic emergence of Japan, etc. have all contributed to continually altered public perceptions.

But even while exhibiting these interior shifts, the overall scheme continues to remain entrenched in its "limit-possibilities" of what is racially thinkable—its "absolute boundary markers" of blackness and whiteness. Thus far in North American history, it is quite arguable that "black" and "white" have specificied a social difference of absolute opposition. Between themselves, they have opened a shifting continuum of colors and meanings that itself remains defined by a *fixed* polarity. Whatever we think of the other categories of racialization, black and white seem thus far locked, in our perceptions of race (and in much of our social structure), in an opposition of mutual exclusivity. North American multiculturalism unfolds inside the structure of a racial double.

But the seeming simplicity of this structure is deceptive. Black and white are anything but simply black *or* white. Paradoxically, in offering fixed points of reference, either term actually also (surreptitiously) *invokes* its opposite—precisely by way of its presumed exclusion. "White" means—at the most basic social level, whatever else it may represent—"not black." (Certainly it is not "descriptive": my skin is actually more "pink" than white.) Vice versa, blackness likewise depends for its meanings upon cultural assumptions about what constitutes its opposite in this country—"whiteness." Whether at the level of the material economy or that of cultural symbols, either side of the black-white nexus of significance *necessarily* implicates the other. The only "sense" either one has is (negatively) dependent on the sense of the other. In the strangeness of North American racialization, blackness and whiteness end up integral to each other's substance and significance.

However, this interlocking doubleness of meaning is hardly ever grasped as such. Normally, the terms black and white are employed individually, as if they designated realities that are comprehensible in themselves. Either term operates effectively—in the media, in everyday conversation, indeed, in our very first moments of perception—as a singular sign of reference, as if designating something obvious and pre-given, standing outside the ambit of opposition within which alone it can have meaning.

In fact, black and white necessarily always coordinate their respective meanings together—even when only one term is employed. It is this surreptitious *togetherness-in-separateness* that then gives racialization its intransigent power of signification. Any attempt to negate either the pejorative connotations of blackness or the positive presumptions of whiteness falls into the trap of their mutual opposition. The attempt itself *already presupposes* the very opposition it seeks to obliterate. Indeed, it is only when blackness and whiteness are finally understood as semantically and culturally *inseparable* that their distorting power of oppositional exclusivity can begin to be grasped and undone.

That beginning remains largely unventured and aberrant. That black and white are opposites—not only semantically, but in some measure socially, in our cultural assumptions about and practices of racialization—remains the great unstated and unexamined racial "truism," present in North America almost like air is present. Everyone simply "knows" such is the case. Surrender of the distinction "black-white" as an absolute opposition would presumably constitute, for many North Americans, the epistemological equivalent of a return to the womb, a collapse of psycho-social structure threatening everything from cultural dissolution to the very obliteration of national identity itself. This, I take to be the significance of Haki R. Madhubuti's statement in the book, *Why L.A. Happened*, "It is not ... bold enough to say that America has a race problem ... America *is* a race problem" (Madhubuti 1993:xiii). This is also why I think the necesary pluralization or multiculturalization of the question of race in contemporary North America does not alter the necessity of continuing to frame its problematic as preeminently that of the inter-relationship of white and black.

BLACKNESS AS SIGNIFICATION UPON OPPRESSION

However, it is important to assert that even if this reading of North American racialization as a complex co-production of blackness and whiteness together is correct, responsibility for such

does not fall on the two sides equally. Historically (and up to and including our own contemporary moment), the power to define identities and control perceptions has rested overwhelmingly with the dominant white culture. DuBois documents a doubleness not of his own authoring—although the fact that his own sense of self had been irretrievably "invaded" by white projections of blackness did not imply that he ceased creating his own meaning and became a mere passive reflection of white imaginings. Rather, he invented himself *within* the social and cultural "space" allowed him: a region of meaning in public discourse that demanded, whatever else he might seek to become, that he must *be black.*

No, the problem of racialization—historically and phenomenologically—finds its tap root within notions of racial identity developed more by whites than blacks. Blacks—creatively resistant to such fabrications in their best moments—have been, in their worst moments, merely complicitous. Whites, on the other hand, have tended to be not only (evily) ingenious, but even pathologically intransigent, in their views. It is, therefore, whiteness that faces the greatest demand for conversion in the problematic of race.

In theological terms, blackness—as the signifier of greatest contempt in the discourse of race—is, as Cone asserts, the only possible "color" salvation can take in the eyes of a just God. In North America, a God of incarnation who frees the slaves and becomes poor with the poor *cannot but* take on blackness as a christological "position." Blackness becomes a christological title at this juncture in North America—for both blacks *and whites.* The consequences for the latter are then quite paradoxical.

The possibility of receiving salvation in a manner that liberates from racist illusions and pathological power structures mandates for whites willing submission to a kind of double-bind. It implies both embracing blackness as part of one's own "wholeness" without pretending for a moment to become black and struggling to embody oneself authentically "as" white while simultaneously resisting whiteness as a form of domination. The demand—and its resolution—are duplicate.

On the one hand, if whiteness and blackness indeed co-implicate each other, then white theology must be comprehended as already profoundly tangled up in blackness. Its very North American identity and bodily-being are already rooted in a "racial economy of the double," a scene of appropriation and surreptition *at* which it has always been present, but *from* which it absents itself in both mind and body (both psychologically and sociologically). Whiteness has always lived off of black *substance* (various forms of slave and servile and wage labor), *significance* (its projected inferiority securing white notions of superiority), and "*soulfulness*" (intellectual and semantic creativity, aesthetic profoundity, political vision, etc.). However, it has usually been confused about, if not unconscious of, its dependence.

On the other hand, Black Theology, as a disciplined articulation of the theological meaning of black experience, is already quite savvy about this entangled twoness. It is not only *competent about*, but stands as an existential *criticism of*, the "racial double" in its very ability to speak and live in various black *and* white worlds. Semantically, it does not just speak its word as a wounded cry of injustice, "bellowing blackly" in the white halls of universities and divinity schools. Rather, it emerges—often with great sophistication—as a forcibly learned capacity to multiply meaning across the divide of race for the sake of survival. It redoubles its own doubling in the direction of a profound capacity for creative irony. In its own words, it "signifies."

The special competence of "black rhetoricity"—of both black linguistic ability in general and Black Theology in particular—can be grasped (at least in part) under the rubric of the "trope." It often shows itself as a facility for creative shifts of reference, a heightened ability to use words in such a way that they express more than one thing at once. Its sharpness is often quite subtle—seemingly reinforcing some common stereotype while simultaneously standing it on its head, or taking words into completely unanticipated regions of significance. "Bad" becomes

"good" as in Michael Jordan is *baaad*; "jams" are "deaf," "looks" are "dope." Indeed, black thought and speech have consistently re-forged their DuBoisian "doubleness"—on the anvil of oppression and under the disciplines of African rhetorical genius—into a critical practice of profound power. It is this very power of tropological inventiveness that a Henry Louis Gates, Jr. can theorize in his book, *The Signifying Monkey*, as the *meaning of blackness in language practice*. (His is not the only possible reading I could have used at this point, but it is cogent for my purposes.)

The Gatesian trope of signifyin(g) is provocative. We could perhaps hint at its interracial significance here by way of DuBois's description of his childhood encounter with a little white school-girl, who, in a classroom exchange of visiting-cards, refused his card with a "preremptory glance" and gave him his first conscious taste of racial difference (DuBois 1961:16). (The experience was paradigmatic: other black authors have recounted their own versions of the same kind of life-wrenching encounter). It is not difficult to imagine this little eye of white racism unwittingly fixing "blackness" on young DuBois (in Gates' "syntagmatic" register of significance) as an inescapable *singularity* of meaning, riveting him to an idea not of his own making and making him bear it unrelentingly (Thompson 1983:222). It would have accomplished its crime of dehumanization far beyond the ken of that little girl, in the time of a mere blink, functioning—in the force of a mysterious envy and fear—as a kind of quintessence of the "evil eye," seeking to "possess" that little boy with its own meaning in the very act of voiding his substance. In the face of that simple gaze of refusal, DuBois experienced the entire meaning of racialization.

In relationship to this racial fixation, then, Gates's understanding of signifyin(g) is well imagined as the antidote, the healing "breakup" of the singular meaning of that debilitating envisionment. Within the world of shared blackness behind the "DuBoisian veil," vernacular practices of "signifyin' and

specifyin'" have long served as balm and betterment—inescapable glance dispersed by an irrepressible tongue. They show their force as a life-long, off-beat *proliferation* of meaning, "troping" white projections of a simple transparency of sense. It is not difficult to imagine, for instance, in relationship to DuBois's experience above, various kinds of "come backs" that would make explicit the white stereotypes animating the girl's refusal. Such "counter-responses" would signify one way or another something like—"Yes, sure enough, white folks had better reject our cards, our friendship, indeed, our very being, because *we are black*—chitt'lin'-eating, soul-singing, bebopping, hip-hopping neeegros—lazy, lyrical, languid, lying, stupifying, black! And some of that blackness may just rub off on them, if they receive something from us!"—all said with arched eyebrows or bobbing head or laughing gaze punctuating the words with a profound irony and profusion of significance that would creatively overturn and reverse the surface significance of the words and enable the community to craft the pain of the encounter into an experience of instructive entertainment. DuBois himself writes that he "had thereafter no desire to tear down the veil" that the girl's refusal had thrown up (DuBois 1903:16). Rather, he abides within her implicit "defintion" and seeks to overturn it from inside, by wresting her [white] world's "prizes" of education and opportunity across the divide into his own supposed "blackness."

Signifyin(g), here, can be grasped as the overcoming of oppression by the opening out of unforeseen and unforeseeable possibilities under the very gaze of race—the creation of entire enclaves of ironic being in which the meaning itself of oppressive signification is restaged as a "paradigmatic" prolixity (Gates 1988:49). For Gates, signifyin(g) styles itself as (among other things) a communal strategy of black *jujitsu* performed on white referentiality, both a troping of its meaning and a transcending of its constraints (Gates 1987:356). It is perhaps as good a designation as any for the whole range of speech practices articulating, from the black side of things, the contestation that constitutes the

seemingly ever-present force-field of tension *between* black and white. At one level, blackness of being simply *is* signifyin' of speech.

BLACKNESS AS CHRISTOLOGICAL RESISTANCE TO WHITENESS

If Gates is right, it is then this complex and critical blackness that I, as a white, am faced with in the black Jesus. It is a *blackness* of Jesus that is nowhere specifiable (for me) under any single sign of significance, but appears rather as a profusion of meaning and complication of identity that is always opaquely present before me when I interact with blacks. It is a presence that I think opens before white theology a difference that is salvific.

I am proposing here a white theological approach to the blackness of Jesus in North America not simply as the willing embrace of a messiah with dark skin, but indeed as the studied submission to the syntax of a *black Logos*. Black experience articulates its Christ not merely as historical meaning, but in fact as communal style. This is a Christ who signifies and "tropes," who speaks in the gestures of body and eye. It is a Christ of nuance and subtle negation. Incarnational seriousness on the part of whites necessarily means careful attention paid to form as well as content. From the point of view of a concern for racial healing—of a salvation worked out at the level of racialization—this Jesus must be grasped as opening up, within the on-going history of this country, the rhetorical space of a profound *dia-Logos* that cuts the heart differently in the different racial communities.

For blacks, the Word of God itself here appears as the christological corporealization of black *signification*. It is a practice of the Word as a spiritual power of complex creativity—a reservoir of *reduplication* in which the emphasis is upon a communicative "call and response," a vitality of contrastive counterpoint and simultaneity of multiple meaning whose payoff is an experience of *reciprocity* between speaker and hearer (Thompson 1983:xiii, Gates 1988:62). In secular guise, in the writings of a

Zora Neal Hurston or a Toni Morrison, it can even appear as the possibility of *utopic mutuality*, a form of exchange in language and being that is counter-capitalist (Willis 1987:106, 99). It incarnates a linkage of signifier and signified, as Gates says, in a relationship of equality rather than subordination that necessarily defies any singularity of reference (Gates 1988:62). It is thus a "playing with language"—in the deadly earnest business of naming and identifying—that privileges a shared construction and enjoyment of meanings. Indeed, the unique mental mobilization it effects in the black community could perhaps be summed up as a kind of *spiritual economy of improvisational reason*.

But, *but!*—it is not a spiritual economy immediately or easily accessible to *white theology*, even at the level of discourse. The very doubleness itself of the space of (black) signifyin(g) breaks up the white intention "to know" into ironic indeterminacy. Jesus, here, is not so much black textual *icon* for white gaze and consumption, as black figural *obstacle* for white confrontation and confounding.

For white theology, this black Jesus is accessible only by way of a profoundly committed and never completed faith-journey *through* black criticism—a critical difference coded as much in style as in content. Here, the stakes imply not only new program, but new poetics. In line with Cone's assertion that the saving action of Jesus can be verified only in dialogue with the community of the oppressed, white theology is confronted with the necessity of becoming culturally "bi-lingual" (as indeed Black Theology has been from its inception) (Cone 1975:208). It faces a demand for a "speech-competence" outside the norms of academic discourse that will subject it to entirely different "criteria of intelligibility" (Habermas 1970:129).

Which is to say, in the encounter with Black Theology, white theology is finally faced with encountering *itself* as signified *upon*. Even before beginning to interact, it is already positioned as the object of an ironic power of de-centering whose most immediate conscious effect is a doubling of whiteness back upon

itself, reduplicating its very desire "to understand" as first of all a question of self-understanding. Whether or not white theology can then ever muster any kind of communicative competence on black terms, I want to argue that Black Theology as black signifyin(g) at least mobilizes what could be called an "imperative of origins."

IRONIC RESISTANCE AS INITIATORY DISCIPLINE

Alongside Black Theology's articulation for itself of emancipatory action as its major critical criteria (cf. George Cummings, 1993 Religion and Society Section of the American Academy of Religion), I want to suggest that its major critical *effect* vis à vis white theology is not so much "freedom" as *initiation*. In its presence (or even the presence of its absence), whiteness is inexorably faced with an apparently irresolvable quandry and task of re-learning. It is faced, that is, with the necessity of a re-turn and re-immersion into the opacity of its own existential beginnings, that seemingly innocent moment when it thought it knew the world clearly as black and white. In that very moment, gathered back into its own original sin of seeing double, it will not only find itself contradicted by black counter-meanings, but confronted with its own liminal uncertainty (in the sense outlined by anthropologist Victor Turner in his work, *The Ritual Process*, 1969:94–130). It will find itself on a strange and shifting terrain of meanings in which it can rediscover its own identity only on the other side of a journey through the terror of its own (racial) immaturity.

I am attempting, then, to outline the dialectic of a racial encounter that faces whites with a profound plunge out of certainty and into a way of humility. In a field of social practice and predicament as fraught with distorted perception and as constrained by perverse powers as is the scene of race in North America, the way forward is necessarily painful and confused. Blacks know it, are up against it every day, hammer out their integrity in the vortex of its contestation at every turn. White hope to escape such a maelstrom of struggle is itself self-deluding at the

least, and—in its very real social configuration as structures of exclusion and avoidance—demonically catastrophic at worst. The paradigm of "ironic doubling" simply seeks to underscore the connundrum, explicitly.

In the field of the racial double, the way forward for whites can only be negotiated across a space of jeopardy. Mistakes and failure are inevitable. The key is not avoidance of "mis-speaking," but rather a willingness to be taught. It means developing the capacity "to walk" not merely by risking falling, but by learning from those falls, and getting up and placing the next step more securely, more committedly, on a path that leads ultimately to racial maturity. It has as its goal, an "initiated" whiteness, a whiteness marked by the scars of its own submission to the struggle to untangle the knot of race and thus finally self-conscious and versatile enough to engage in cross-racial dialogue and action as a peer.

I am outlining, then, a choice white theology is already caught up in making and re-making. There is no escape from our history here. White theology already *is* racialized theology and is already tangled up in the very blackness Black Theology proposes as a challenge. The question is how to proceed. The choice is clear even if its practical consequences are convoluted.

Either white theology continues to consolidate its hegemonic identity (indeed, its very "corporeality," its very way of being a body in the world) as racist in its own existential and institutional space of normativity—and thus presumes to continue to judge Black Theology by the canons of academic whiteness, or it gives assent to a new level of conflict and re-learns the meaning of its own whiteness *in the present moment*, as an effect of discursive contestation and exchange. It must choose, that is, either the security of an oppressive certainty or the option for a liberating, though confusing and painful, way of risk and growth.

However, even where white theology *does* opt for a process of racial maturation, its "exchange" with Black Theology would not, for the foreseeable future, ever be one of simple dialogue and reciprocity—and that on two counts.

On the one hand, Black Theology as minority discourse will always know more about whiteness than whiteness can hope to comprehend about black experience. Any "crossing over" even by a "politically committed" white theology—any learning of black style, any accession to black competence—will ever be suspect in its constant vulnerability to recuperation back on the white side of the line of difference as a new form of exoticism at minimum, or of stealing and profit-making, at worst. Cultural "borrowing," on the part of the dominant, never quite seems to result in repayment. However, in spite of such risks, it is not an option for white theology to abstain from the attempt to become bi-cultural and to retreat one more time into a cloistered, fortified whiteness of exclusion. Rather, it must embrace its position as learner, as negotiating an itinerary of the double that is both profoundly troubled and the occasion for tremendous growth in compassion and humility.

On the other hand, white theology itself can never enter into reciprocal relations with blackness merely by "deciding" to abdicate its hegemonic power unilaterally. As has been remarked again and again in various theorizations of racialization in North America, white privilege, at heart, is *constituted* as a privilege of choice. Unlike blacks or other people of color who struggle constantly with the ubiquity of white cultural normativities, whites can almost always find some cultural space not marked by the judging gaze of an other. Most whites do not have to deal with racial difference at all, *if they do not choose to do so*. Even where a choice for encounter or crossing over *is* made, that very capacity to choose (usually) remains within their grasp.

THE DISCIPLINE OF "DOUBLING" AS SOTERIOLOGICAL NECESSITY

Given such an asymmetry (of reciprocal possibilities) of discursive exchange, theologically I am only able to imagine that power of white choice as constrained by *soteriological necessity*. In the eyes of a just God, a God of just reversals, I do not see how it could be otherwise. That is to say, for my money, the salvific blackness of

Jesus on the scene of race in contemporary North America, can only mean for whites that there is no salvation "as" whites, *inside of* mere "whiteness." Whiteness must choose to place itself "under" *black* judgement and naming for the sake of its own deliverance and healing—all the while recognizing that that very choice itself is a luxury of domination and already marks it as different from a blackness that cannot exercise a similar power of choice to escape from *white* judgement.

Within such a racialized economy of salvific grace, white "salvation" means a forcible conversion out of the ease of monolithic "transparency" and into the anguished uncertainty of an opaque encounter. I as a white cannot save myself; nor can I be saved by trying to become non-white. The frequently heard white paraphrase of the experience of racial interaction as one of being "dammed if you do and dammed if you don't," describes the situation exactly. There is no escape from the situation of sinful complicity in oppressive structures of privilege except by way of ownership of the "damnation" of such complicity. It is precisely the inescapability of the contortions of the double that defines black racial agony. Whites cannot hope to overcome their own racism absent negotiation of that very same torturous complexity—a doubling whose production already implicates the deepest recesses of their own sense of self.

If "I" am to be saved, I must come face-to-face with the "I" that needs such salvation. Paradoxically, I need to simultaneously confess myself as "only" white, along with all that that has meant historically, and to come to know myself as more than "just" white, under a protocol not my own. (Indeed, I can "receive" myself only to the degree I risk myself.) I am faced, that is, with being, myself, racially "doubled" for the sake of becoming, myself, capable of more than just doubling—and that, finally, as an issue of salvation.

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Building an Hermeneutical House on Shifting Consciousness:

Orality, Literacy, Images, and Interpretation

S. BRENT PLATE

IT HAS BEEN OVER 10 YEARS SINCE THE PUBLICATION OF Werner Kelber's *The Oral and the Written Gospel* and almost as long since Jean François Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* appeared in English. Granted, these two books have little in common except that they both work from the hypothesis that the medium of communication affects communication itself. A change in the medium—whether that medium is speech, writing, electronics, or visual images—alters thought processes, communication patterns, and even the organization of communities. In other words, the medium of communication alters consciousness. To put it in Marshall McLuhan's often quoted hyperbole, "The medium is the message."

This article will explore some examples of media-oriented scholarship from the last ten years as it pertains to biblical criticism. As background information, the first section will look at orality and literacy studies which demonstrate that the shift from a primarily oral culture to a written culture was not a simple one-to-one transference. Rather, the medium of communication affected

the reception and subsequent interpretation of the *content* of communication, thereby problematizing efforts to understand a culture established around media different than the interpreter's own. Secondly, I will continue with an overview of media-oriented criticism, but here the focus will move from orality and literacy issues to problems involving western culture's current shift from the printed word to images and electronic communication. This current shift in consciousness, as I will argue, is as dramatic as was the move from orality to literacy. The final section will draw out some implications for scholarship in the midst of the current shift.

ORALITY AND LITERACY STUDIES

In *The Oral and the Written Gospel*, Werner Kelber has collected studies from an ever-increasing body of research on orality and literacy and brought it to bear on biblical criticism. While he is especially interested in Markan studies, the research is applicable to many areas of biblical scholarship. Kelber himself points out that he is not the first biblical critic to be cognizant of differences between a primarily oral culture and a written culture (Bultmann and Gerhardsson are mentioned in this regard). However, Kelber recognizes the differences to a greater degree than has anyone before him, partly because there has been a great deal of study done on orality and literacy in the last 60 years. Kelber's work is groundbreaking because he has brought to bear on biblical criticism studies gleaned from fields such as linguistics, anthropology, sociology, and folklore, by scholars such as Milman Parry, Albert Lord, Eric Havelock, Jack Goody, and perhaps popularized by Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong.[1]

[1] For a thorough bibliography of orality and literacy studies, see Walter Ong's *Orality and Literacy*. Ong is certainly the most comprehensive and wide-ranging contemporary scholar of orality and literacy and has had the biggest influence on Kelber.

By bringing together studies from these various fields, Kelber demonstrates just how great the gap is between oral communication and written communication. As he writes,

> The text, while asserting itself out of dominant oral traditions and activities, has brought about a freezing of oral life into textual still life. In short, the oral legacy has been deracinated and transplanted into a linguistic construct that has lost touch with the living, oral matrix. Mark's writing manifests a transmutation more than mere transmission, which results in a veritable upheaval of hermeneutical, cognitive realities. (1983:91)

In contrast, most scholars (including Bultmann and Gerhardsson) have traditionally understood words as a record rather than an event. According to this understanding, whatever was spoken could simply be written down, and nothing would be lost in the transmission. When words are perceived to be a record, one may assume that there is a linear movement from oral to written. Kelber, however, sees this shift as more dramatic: it is a "transmutation more than mere transmission."

While the early Christian movement grew out of a milieu with a strong emphasis on the written word, the original Christians were born from an itinerant prophet who left no written record. "As speaker of words and teller of stories, he [Jesus] shared the fate of all oral performers prior to the electronic age that his words would not only be misunderstood, but vanish the very instant they came into being" (Kelber 1983:19). The spoken words of Jesus were tied to the movement of life itself through time, for speech is not stored in any space. As one speaks, the sounds trail off and disappear. Walter Ong describes this phenomenon: "Sound exists only when it is going out of existence. It is not simply perishable but essentially evanescent. When I pronounce the word 'permanence,' by the time I get to the '-nence,' the 'perma-' is already gone, and has to be gone"

(1982:32). Oral speech is chronologically oriented, while written words are tied to the spatial. Speech is an event, a one time happening.

Furthermore, the oral world has a different view of history. "Stories and sayings are authenticated not by virtue of their historical reliability, but on the authority of the speaker and by the reception of hearers ... . Orality's principal concern is not to preserve historical actuality, but to shape and break into memorable, applicable speech" (Kelber 1983:71). Theology and biblical criticism of the last few centuries have aimed at historical re-creation, but have largely ignored the way knowledge in the oral world was turned into fixed, formulaic sayings which were repeatable, aesthetically interesting, rhythmic, and—to twentieth century minds—redundant, totalizing, conservative, and homeostatic. As Ong explains,

> oral societies live very much in a present which keeps itself in equilibrium or homeostasis by sloughing off memories which no longer have present relevance ... . The oral mind is uninterested in definitions. Words acquire their meanings only from their always insistent actual habitat, which is not, as in a dictionary, simply other words, but includes also gesture, vocal inflections, facial expression, and the entire human, existential setting in which the real, spoken word always occurs.[2] (1982:46–47)

Contrasted with orality is the critical distance which written textuality provides. The invention of an alphabet complete with vowels (around 750 BCE) was a significant step in the ability to break down language, to "atomize" it and, therefore, subject it to objective analysis. This dissective ability gave rise to the great philosophical tradition which emerged in the Greek culture in the 5th and 4th centuries BCE. Writing, that is, placing a symbol at a

[2] Ong takes much of this from Luria (1976).

point in space for safe keeping, freed the mind for other things. Philosophers were given a greater freedom of exploration, an exploration of the psyche, ethics, poetics, and biology.

This distancing allows a different view of cultural reality, and so, of death. Oral speech, because it is more in synch with the lifeworld, "is drawn to presence and present activity. But death, above all else, spells absence" (Kelber 1983:198). Because of its connection with "present activity," speech could not approach the death of Jesus; it is only in writing that distance could be acquired, and absence through that distance. Like a flower, dead and pressed between the pages, historical events now past are preserved in writing. Writing alters the "presence" of orality by allowing communication to exist in absence.

Once Kelber works out a new interpretive framework, he uses orality and literacy issues as a way of rehashing current debates within biblical studies. This is where his book comes up short. He makes a strong argument for the radical difference between oral and written communication. However, he then uses this information to say—in effect—that we can now understand what it was like, and we can now get back to the oral structures. Kelber criticizes previous views of orality "for the imposition of linearity upon oral life" (1983:32) and writes that we must treat orality as a medium in its own right. Yet, even with all of the studies of orality and literacy, he still cannot shed his textual bias. The fact that Kelber *read* the oral studies of Havelock, Ong and others, and proceeded to *write* a book on his findings should alert him to the fact that he himself has in no way recovered or uncovered primary orality. I imagine he would not claim that he had. However, rather than leaving the oral/written gap as the aporia that he argues it is, Kelber goes on to write as if he has just found some new hermeneutical clue that will perhaps allow us to understand in a new historical manner. Historical research—such as orality and literacy studies—continually uncovers new findings which, rather than giving a further step toward understanding, really serve to illustrate fundamental differences. The maxim here

holds true: "The more we know, the less we know." My purpose in such a criticism is not to discard this book; rather, it is to see the full effects of such research, the radical differences between the oral and the written worlds.

Now, the differences between the oral and the written are due, in part, to technological developments which add an element of distance beyond simple linear chronology; there is more than 1900 years between the Gospel of Mark and Kelber. In the following, I will reiterate some of the findings of orality and literacy studies, showing the effects technological development has had on communication patterns.

As briefly discussed above, the development of the alphabet and eventually an alphabet with vowels are among the first dramatic technological developments in communication structures. After this, the Greek invention of an alphabet with vowels was replaced by a dead language, Learned Latin, as the chief medium for learning in the Western world. ("Dead" because no one spoke it as a primary language.) Walter Ong suggests that

> Learned Latin effects an even greater objectivity by establishing knowledge in a medium insulated from the emotion charged depths of one's mother tongue, thus reducing interference from the human lifeworld and making possible the exquisitely abstract world of medieval scholasticism and of the new mathematical modern science which followed on the scholastic experience. (1982:114)

The reading and writing of Learned Latin provided a tool by which men (and I do mean men) could look at the world even more objectively than with Greek. Each scholastic invention provided a further distancing from the "mother tongue," and therefore, from the concrete realities of the world. Obviously, most of the world remained in a primarily oral culture, but each invention was a step toward removing oral communication as primary shaper of culture.

Eventually the printing press and the translation of the Bible into the vernacular began to bring about high literacy rates which removed most of the vestiges of the oral culture.[3] Western culture moved into the age of the printed word in which silent and solitary reading became an increasingly prominent mode of perception of written texts. George Steiner even suggests that private reading demanded a spacious home where one could be alone (1986:383). As printed books became accessible and portable one could read in one's own space and move the books in and out of one's own home. Books were no longer bound to academies. This phenomenon was far from all-encompassing, but the technologies helped shift the split between the haves and have-nots. During the period in which the middle class surfaced, socio economic differences began to be effected by a new commodity: *information*. This remains an important and often overlooked fact in social critiques of the period even today.

In the twentieth century, textual obsession reached a zenith. This can be seen, among other places, in the rise of the New Criticism in literary studies and in the fundamentalism that came out of Princeton Seminary earlier in the century. The printed text itself became the end-all of knowledge and all that was needed for interpretation. Print eventually leads to a closed system. As Walter Ong says: "Print encourages a sense of closure, a sense that what is found in a text has been finalized, has reached a state of completion" (1982:132). One of the reasons for this closure is that "typographic control typically impresses more by its tidiness and inevitability: the lines perfectly regular, all justified on the right side, everything coming out even visually" (122). In the same way, print-oriented interpretation itself became unwilling to move outside the margins. I would contend that the hegemonic control of patriarchal culture has a great deal to do with the influence that technological advances have on ways of seeing.

[3] For the effects of the printing press, see especially Eisenstein. On high literacy rates, see Hart.

When everything is "coming out even visually" in the dominant communication structures, rigid control translates into other relationships as well.

And so we reach the latter half of the twentieth century where through forces such as feminist, poststructural, and libertarian criticisms, as well as the rise of television, film, and the emergence of a late capitalist/postindustrial society, we are finally able to gain distance from critical methods developed in the age of the printed word, and to see again how our consciousness may be changing. As Lyotard states at the beginning of *The Postmodern Condition*, "the status of knowledge is altered as societies enter what is known as the postindustrial age and cultures enter what is known as the postmodern age" (1984:3). Indeed, this may be as much a reason as any for the ability of someone like Kelber to see the differences in an oral and a written world. The current shift in media allows distance from the previous medium and, as we have seen, criticism comes about through distance.

THE CURRENT SHIFT

But what is this current shift? Is electronic communication merely a further extension of the pen, the printing press, and the typewriter? To a degree it is nothing more than hyperprint, but electronic communication has helped bring one element to light which has not been given much treatment in communication structures of the past: *the image*. In the past the image took the form of icons and the visual arts, traditionally regarded as secondary media in the west. Today the image is dominant—presented on television, in films, advertisements and hair styles. Just as in the ancient world the dominant mode of communication (that medium chiefly responsible for the construction of culture) was orality, and just as the printed word became dominant during the last 2,500 years or so, it is now the case that the image is becoming the communicative medium most prevalent in the construction of western culture. Just as oral communication has not vanished from culture, neither will the printed word. Today's culture revolves

more and more around the image than around spoken or written language.

While it is true that images and icons have been a part of a great deal of the Christian tradition, my focus here will be on the Western church, where the dominant theological interpretations have centered around the "dots and iotas" of verbal language and where the rise of the printed word has meant an increased repression of images. And yet, the repressed inevitably re-emerges, as it has in the current culture.

While an ever-increasing number of critics are beginning to pay attention to the shifting communication patterns brought about by electronic technology, most theories have had to remain very general. Thomas Boomershine's 1987 essay, "Biblical Megatrends: Towards a Paradigm for the Interpretation of the Bible in Electronic Media," is a good example of recent attention to, but general theorizing on, the new media. In the essay he states, "We are not at a stage in which a fully documented theory can be formulated" (1987:144). The possibility or impossibility of any "fully documented theory" may be another question entirely, but the tone of Boomershine's essay is that, regardless of a full theory, there is a long way to go in any rethinking of communication structures.

In part, the critics (including Boomershine) are biting off more than they can chew by trying to grasp in totality the veritable revolution in communication which infects a wide variety of cultural forces: political structures, advertising, the changing face of the two-thirds world, academic conferences, teaching and biblical interpretation. New communication structures brought about through continuing advances in technology can perhaps be unified under the rubric of "electronic communication," but such a phrase is quickly dissipated when one realizes the differences between, say, e-mail via the Internet and the CNN coverage of the Gulf War. Both could be designated "electronic communications," yet there are drastic differences. Electronic technologies have dramatically altered the way our western cultures and societies

receive and disperse information, and there are a myriad of types of communication in place today due to "electronic communication." Because of this we are at pains to separate one type of communication (e.g., world wide news coverage) from another (e.g., the Internet).

For this reason I believe it is important to break down this imposing structure, "electronic communication," and to develop critiques which look at individual pieces of the electronic structure. One place to begin may be to look at the image as a mode of communication. But even this greatly reduced task must begin by cutting across existing boundaries of academic disciplines and draw from the diverse fields of literary criticism, art history, the psychodynamics of sight and hearing, critical theory, film, and television studies. There is no one academic discipline from which to ground an analysis of the image, especially, as I am suggesting in this article, if we are concerned with the impact this other medium of communication has on interpretation.

In what follows I will review some recent scholarship with a view towards the image and how this, in turn, has an effect on biblical interpretation. This recent work seems to be directed in two ways, one toward the past—with a reevaluation of the visual arts which have been a part, albeit repressed, of western culture for centuries—and the other directed toward the future—with attention to the appropriation of the religious into the latest technological communication medium.

Beginning, (chrono)logically enough, with the visual arts of the past, Jane and John Dillenberger have devoted most of their scholastic life to bringing the arts and theology together. They have been unafraid to view the image as a way of knowing, even theological knowing, and even if the content of the image is not explicitly religious.

In a 1985 essay, Jane Dillenberger considers a brief history of "The Appearance and Disappearance of God in Western Art" and examines a selection of paintings which have biblical themes as their content. Such famous paintings as Grunewald's *Isenheim*

Altarpiece (which was such an influence on Karl Barth) is considered, as are William Blake's illustrations of the *Book of Job*. Moving into the twentieth century, Dillenberger considers that as representational art has disappeared, so God has disappeared from view. But God's absence is present [sic] in paintings like Barnett Newman's *Stations of the Cross* (1965–1966): large, black and white canvases revealing little more than a few stripes. Rather than re-present the traditional "Stations," Newman was concerned with the drama of the last words of Jesus:

> I was trying to call attention to that part of the Passion which I have always felt was ignored and which has always affected me and that was the cry of *Lema Sabachthani*. ... I felt that to the extent that Jesus was crucified and did physically say *Lema Sabachthani* in relation to that drama, that it was more appropriate for me to be concerned with the Sabachthani (... forsaken me). (1971:99)

This reinterpretation of a biblical passage challenges the viewer's perception on more than a verbal level. It brings a previously unthought and unfelt aesthetic element to bear on hermeneutical strategies. Here is a visual attempt at "re-presenting" a cry, an extreme human feeling of abandonment. While the written text is undoubtedly necessary for historical preservation, the written words disappear in the visual presence of these paintings.

Dillenberger is unafraid to rethink communication and interpretation, but more than this, sees such rethinking as essential to the continuation of history. The interpretation of history changes with new communication developments, but the past may be lost unless new efforts of interpretation which acknowldege media shifts are worked out. She ends the essay with a somewhat prophetic comment,

> We live in a waiting time—an awaiting of the birth of new symbols and new imagery. But this should not be a passive

> waiting. It should be a time of experimentation, openness, and a passionate and expectant awaiting. We must keep alive the religious art and imagery of the past, to try to understand it in its own terms and to make it a part of the present, for all new imagery grows out of the fabric of past history. (1992:107)

Similarly, John Dillenberger calls for a "Theology of Wider Sensibilities," and argues "that the visual defines an essential ingredient of our humanity" (1986:231). As has been noted above, images and visuality have been neglected elements in Western thought, and to reconsider them means the shedding of verbal biases. Indeed, as Dillenberger states, "it is apparent that language lost its powers of imagination and became that which declared, defined, set limits. In contrast, painting is a suggestive, showing-forth modality, which in the light of what we know, wrests nuances of meaning" (239). The sense of closure that the printed word encourages can be opened up again. One way to do this is to allow paintings as abstract as Newman's to challenge interpretative strategies.

To the Dillenbergers, and to other recent religious thinkers, the visual arts provide a viable epistemology, a way of knowing and understanding apart from the verbal. While there is debate as to whether images can be constituted as language, the point to be considered here is that the image is a mode of communication, and therefore, a way of knowing and a partial constructor of cultural attitudes. The paintings of the past can be re-envisioned in a radical use of the imagination which would loose the hegemonic control of closed interpretation.

Moving from less explicitly religious criticism into a field which has had a great influence on biblical interpretation, we find literary critics having to rethink their own field of texts, literacy, and reading. Literary criticism has enjoyed a prominent role in the academy this century, but it may be the case that it is now being replaced by fields such as cultural studies and film studies, as

communication's media shift from the printed word to the image and electronics. Celebrated literary critics such as J. Hillis Miller, Jonathan Culler, and Gregory Ulmer have all recently devoted attention to the image and have moved to expand the boundaries of language. Along literary critical lines, Mieke Bal's *Reading "Rembrandt"* (1991) is a brilliant look at the role of the image and its relationship with verbal language, and the relationship of word-and-image as it is received by the reader. In this 400 page study, Mieke Bal has brought together work done in art history, literary criticism, feminist theory, psychoanalytic theory, film studies, and literature, to go, as the subtitle suggests, "Beyond the Word Image Opposition." By looking at paintings by "Rembrandt," and playing these off of various verbal texts, she interprets in new ways and, in the end, allows for a broader view of what it means to "read."

While there is hardly space for an adequate review of Bal's text, let me give a brief example pertinent to this essay: it is Bal's reading of Rembrandt's sketch, *The Levite Finds His Wife in the Morning*, taken from the narrative in Judges 19. The depiction of this point in the biblical narrative falls between the gang rape and the dismemberment of the woman, a point where the death of the woman is unknown to reader and Levite (for he tells her to "stand up"). Into this unknowing, Rembrandt's sketch inserts a few ambiguous lines just below the right hand of the woman lying on the steps below her "husband's" standing body. These lines give movement to the painting, movement that in Bal's reading become protest,

> But these lines do not depict the woman as "really" alive; they suggest only that she is acting out her story, the story of her continuous death, her death as a process that challenges the epistemological basis of our conception of death as a knowable event. In order to represent her death, then, the drawing must let her move. (369–370)

The visual depiction of death, for Bal, becomes self-reflexively a question about the limits of representation, for "the experience of death is a moment that nobody can describe, an event that nobody can escape, a process that nobody can narrate" (362). And yet, this depiction of a death scene opens up new meanings in interpretation which Bal brings into relation with verbal language,

> The moment in which language and violence are intricately related is precisely the one that our drawing represents: the moment where the woman is no longer able to speak, where her dead flesh is *seen*, misunderstood, addressed, and ultimately, misused in a radical perversion of speech. (364)

There is no hierarchy of speech, written word, and image in *Reading "Rembrandt"*; each medium works with the others, allowing Bal an unprecedented interpretative ability.

Besides the fresh view of the visual arts, attention must be given to the matter of images as they exist in the new electronic media. While electronic communications have heightened our awareness of the image and caused us to rethink images of the past, there has also been a great deal of work done in putting new images into the medium of electronic communication. One of the literary critics mentioned above, Gregory Ulmer, is especially intriguing here in his desire to "televise theory." It is his contention that

> The failure of the humanities disciplines to communicate with the public may be due in part to the fact that what separates specialized humanists from laymen is not only our conceptual apparatus and the discourses of the academy, but the very medium in which we work—the printed word. It is time for the humanities disciplines to establish our cognitive jurisdiction over the communications revolution. ... [T]his responsibility is two fold: first,

> to translate into the "vulgate" the principal works of the disciplines of knowledge; and second, to develop new genres that will serve educators in the electronic era as well as did the literary essay in the Gutenberg era. (1989:viii ix)

Along these lines, Thomas Boomershine has gone from some random ideas and general uncertainty about electronic communication in 1987 (as quoted above), to becoming the chief academic consultant of the American Bible Society's project to translate the Bible into video. Boomershine states that the first step in each new media age is to "put the biblical tradition into the new medium, a 'transmediazation' of texts" (1990:66). The ABS project aims at "transmediaizing" the bible into the electronic multi-media of image, sound and word. This new electronic translation is hoped to be "the correlate for an electronic age of Codex Vaticanus, the Masoretic text, the King James Bible, and whatever modern translation one thinks is best" (68).

It is interesting to note that, while the ABS project incorporates historical-critical tools in its interactive approach to the bible, most people I have talked with who are familiar with the project only discuss the video portions.[4] It seems that the translation of the bible into images is finally the most threatening element involved. Much of the ABS project uses written words, albeit on a computer screen, but the movement of words from paper to screen is not where the revolution lies (though this too will alter interpretive processes). The real shift lies in the translation of word into image.

[4] The presentation of the project usually includes an MTV-style dramatic interpretation of Jesus's encounter with the demoniac in Mark 5. While a narrator reads from the biblical account, upbeat music and a contemporary urban setting—complete with a young, good looking, caucasian male as protagonist (i.e., Jesus)—create a re-enactment of the passage relevant to the current culture (so it is hoped).

Those familiar with church history will quickly bring up the Iconoclastic controversies of the 8th and 9th centuries and consider the current changes to be a new version of these. However, this is a serious misunderstanding of the images I have been considering. It is not icons which are of concern here, it is the possibility that images be considered as having interpretive power. The images which need attention drawn to them are not images of veneration or even representation, but of interpretation, of ways of knowing in light of the critical methods developed in the last two centuries. If the present age is a "post-critical" one (as some would like to argue), it is only so with regards to the printed word. Images remain in a pre-critical place. This is the task I am hoping to set out here: to begin a search for a critique of images which would include the possibility that images themselves could serve as a medium of criticism.

TACTICS FOR THE TIME BEING

At this point the question must become one of tactics,[5] of how to create an imaginative and informed response to these radical changes. The quest for a total theory of the image does not seem to be profitable, just as a total theory of biblical interpretation becomes finally reductionistic. Even my concern here with "the image" as separate from the larger, imposing structure of electronic communication is too broad—and it will quickly be noted how the images I am discussing include both the moving images of video and the "still" images of painting. All attempts at an

[5] I borrow this term from Michel de Certeau, who contrasts it with that of *strategy*. A strategy is a judgement from a point of power and control, "every 'strategic' rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its 'own' place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an 'environment'" (1984:36). By contrast, "The space of a tactic is the space of the other. ... It does not have the means to *keep to itself*, at a distance, in a position of withdrawal, foresight, and self-collection. ... It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. ... In short, a tactic is an art of the weak" (37).

"image critique" must be understood as provisional. My analysis of the image here is contrasted most especially with the printed word, and is a reconsideration of cultural modes of communication. The main purpose is to draw attention to the shift in communication and provide a few thoughts which, it is hoped, will stimulate more thinking.

My starting point stems from the knowledge that the medium of communication effects the content and interpretation of the message. Werner Kelber argues that, as a written gospel, "Mark's writing ... results in a veritable upheaval of hermeneutical, cognitive realities" (1983:91). Mark's writing presents a radical challenge to the dominant communications of the primary, oral world. In a similar way, the "transmediazation" of the bible into electronic media constitutes another such upheaval. Biblical criticism and hermeneutics today remain stuck in the *logos* that is the written word, while the image is reshaping communication and interpretation. My image critique begins with the assumption that the transference of critical tools from one medium to another will be inadequate.

An initial consideration of the image must also reevaluate oppositional thinking structures. Oppositional thinking, which can only see a rigid notion of 'replacement,' must give way to a more flexible notion of 'supplement.' Jacques Derrida's *Of Grammatology* brings out a relationship between speech and writing which, instead of opposing writing to speech, sets them in a supplementary relationship. *Supplement*, in the French, has two significations: it means "addition," "the supplement adds itself, it is a surplus, a plenitude enriching another plentitude, the fullest measure of presence" (1976:144), but it also means "substitute," "if it fills, it is as if one fills a void. If it represents and makes an image, it is by the anterior default of a presence" (145). As writing is a supplement to speech, it is dangerous and necessary. The shift from orality to the written word entailed an absence, a death and "default of a presence." And yet, "what opens meaning and language is writing as the disappearance of natural presence"

(159). It was in writing, after all, that death—which "above all else spells absence" (Kelber 1983:198)—could be communicated. Meaning and language were opened up and the Christian movement was founded on the death of Jesus.

Recalling John Dillenberger's comment above that "language lost its powers of imagination and became that which declared, defined, set limits," while "painting is a suggestive, showing forth modality, which in the light of what we know, wrests nuances of meaning" (1986:239), we may do well to consider a supplementary relationship between speech, writing, and images.[6] There is again a need for the opening of meaning and language. Images may be the *supplement* that is needed. It is read that Socrates (or was it Plato?) tried—in vain ultimately—to argue for speech and against writing because of the dangers involved with loss of memory and authentication.[7] These same arguments are used today in an attempt to oppose writing to images. As with the arguments of Socrates, such arguments will end in vain—or produce more harm than help. Gilles Deleuze rethinks the typical word against image opposition:

> The choice isn't between written literature and audiovisual media. It's between creative forces (in audiovisual media as well as literature) and forces of domestication. ... Creative possibilities may be very different in different modes of expression, but they're related to the extent that

[6] Derrida's *grammatology* would include images: "we say 'writing' for all that gives rise to an inscription in general, whether it is literal or not and even if what it distributes in space is alien to the order of the voice: cinematography, choreography, of course, but also pictorial, musical, sculptural 'writing'" (1976:9). Within my essay, I am using "writing" to mean written (or printed) verbal language and arguing for a supplementary relationship which would consider the image in its own right, apart from writing (in spite of Derrida's liberal definition).

[7] See Plato's *Phaedrus and the Seventh and Eighth Letters* (1973:95–99).

> they must counter the introduction of a cultural space of markets and conformity—that is, a space of producing for the market"—together (1992:290).

When such an open view of language occurs, the fear of the image subsides, and the struggle is recast to offer imaginative views in contrast to those of conformity and domesticity.

Besides the scholastic impact such a media shift may have, the pedagogical implications are clear as well: the current shift ultimately alters all of our communication patterns. Seminaries and Graduate schools remain fixated in the printed word, while the rest of the world is turning around the electronic media. The question becomes one not of how the schools will train the leaders of tomorrow, but how the schools may catch up and have any impact at all on culture. This is the same for the college classroom as it is for the parish. On the other hand, the supplementary relationship described above can perhaps find no better environment in which to flourish than the classroom and church. Where else is there such an already existing space to communicate by use of oral speech, writing, and images? Multi-media efforts have been part of the church and classroom throughout their histories. What needs to occur now is a more self-conscious and self-critical effort to rethink the very rhetoric used to educate.

These are all initial thoughts, thoughts that I am beginning with and hope to continue thinking about. We are left with some choices. The questions raised go along with more general questions in the postmodern era. Some see this time as a crisis—and it may be that too—but it is also an opening, the opportunity to shed the restrictions of the past and to rethink and, more importantly here, re-imagine the shape of biblical scholarship and the teaching of that scholarship in the future.

It has been noted that Western culture today is continually shifting as new technologies come into play, affecting our communication patterns and, ultimately, our ways of knowing. I have tried to show in the preceding that in the shift from an oral culture

to a written culture, up through the printing press and the rise of electronic communications, western culture has experienced several major shifts in its media of communication. Recent orality and literacy studies should alert us to a few key issues: 1) the radicality of the shift from a primarily oral world to a written world, and therefore, 2) the difficulty in trying to theorize from one's own media about cultures saturated and dominated by another medium of communication (whether for historical-critical or other methods of interpretation); 3) the radical and problematic nature of the current shift in communications media for knowledge and interpretation. Finally, 4) there must be taken on a responsibility to rethink modes of communication and, hence, modes of interpretation, in the midst of the current shift. At the very least, at this point, it is essential to pay attention to the way the world is communicating. This has been my chief concern in this paper: to give some attention to the new communications.

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Alasdair MacIntyre on Traditions and their Rationality

WIOLETA POLINSKA

> From a manifest perspective, many contemporary debates are still structured within traditional extremes. There is still an underlying belief that in the final analysis the only viable alternatives open to us are *either* some form of objectivism, foundationalism, ultimate grounding of knowledge, science, philosophy, and language *or* that we are ineluctably led to relativism, skepticism, historicism and nihilism. (Bernstein 1983:2-3)

IN *AFTER VIRTUE*, ALASDAIR MACINTYRE CHARACTERIZES today's moral disagreements as fragmented, interminable and incommensurable (1984:6). This is a direct consequence of the influence exercised by *emotivism*, which has taken over our modern debate. MacIntyre defines emotivism as follows:

> Emotivism is the doctrine that all evaluative judgments and more specifically all moral judgments are *nothing but* expressions of preference, expressions of attitude or feeling, insofar as they are moral or evaluative in character. ... But moral judgments, being expressions of attitude or feeling, are neither true or false; and agreement in moral judgment is not to be secured by any rational method, for

> there are none. It is to be secured, if at all, by producing certain non-rational effects on the emotions or attitudes of those who disagree with one. (1984:12)

As a result, claims MacIntyre, emotivist society lacks any ultimate criteria which can serve in adjudicating different moral decisions. The self in our pluralistic society has no longer any necessary social identity or continuous rational history in which to participate. This situation is quite different from that in pre-modern societies where self was constituted and identified by one's membership in a number of social groups. According to Aristotelian tradition, "to be a man is to fill a set of roles each of which has its own point and purpose: member of a family, citizen, soldier, philosopher, servant of God" (MacIntyre 1984:59). Consequently, a member of such a society had a clear concept of the human *telos* which was in harmony with her true nature and her true end.[1] Human nature was understood in a twofold scheme: human-nature-as-it-happens-to-be and human-nature-as-it-could-be-if-it-realized-its-*telos*. A person's goal in life was to move from pure potentiality to act; to realize one's telos. A thorough agreement with regard to moral considerations was therefore achievable.[2]

[1] MacIntyre implies that the choices one makes within such a community are automatic and do not involve much reflection. MacIntyre grounds his views in his understanding of Aristotle's "practical syllogism," a form of deductive reasoning which immediately precedes the action and terminates in action (1988:125–145, 341). However, John Cooper does not read Aristotle in this way (1975). He distinguishes between "practical syllogism" and "rational deliberation." The latter in fact accounted for human reflection in moral choices. I am following here an argument developed by Martha Nussbaum (1989:37).

[2] It is debatable, whether Aristotle actually argued that people were able to achieve fundamental agreements. Aristotle acknowledged that all human beings search for *eudaimonia* ("the good life for a human being"), but at the same time he says that they cannot come to consensus on what *eudaimonia* is. Aristotle argues in the following way, "Verbally there is general agreement; for both the general run of men and people of superior refinement say that it is happiness, and identify living well and doing well with being happy; but with regard to what happiness is they differ, and the many do not give the same

This pre-modern model of ethics was done away with by Enlightenment thinkers. The latter introduced a new concept of reason which no longer embraced the notion of a true human end. This new understanding implied that

> Reason does not comprehend essences or transitions from potentiality to act; these concepts belong to the despised conceptual scheme of scholasticism. Hence anti-Aristotelian science sets strict boundaries to the powers of reason. Reason is calculative; it can assess truths of fact and mathematical relations but nothing more. In the realm of practice therefore it can speak only of means. *About ends it must be silent.* (MacIntyre 1984:54; italics mine)

It is no wonder that, as a result, human nature was conceived as devoid of any particular *telos*. Since then, moral injunctions have been deprived of their teleological element. They have been seen as ahistorical universal truths, derived from neutral ground. In reality, however, they are "linguistic survivals from the practices of classical theism which have lost the context provided by such practices" (MacIntyre 1984:60). Divorced from their original context, moral utterances have lost their clarity and undebatable status. All endeavors to arrive at rational consensus on morality since the Enlightenment are therefore doomed to fail. Liberation from the external authority of traditional morality has brought about the malady of today's self which faces innumerable moral claims but has no authoritative content by which to adjudicate between them (MacIntyre 1984:68).

Thus, MacIntyre concludes that we live in a dark age, with no hope of achieving a moral consensus. (MacIntyre 1984:252).

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account as the wise. For the former think it is some plain and obvious thing, like pleasure, wealth, or honour; they differ, however, from one another—and often even the same man identifies it with different things, with health when he is ill, with wealth when he is poor ... ." (Aristotle 1931:I, 4) (Nussbaum 1989:37).

The only solution, so he claims, is to retreat to the tradition of virtue, tradition with a story to tell and to be a part of.[3] MacIntyre was heavily criticized for his lack of specificity with regard to location of any particular communities of virtue as well as for his failure to explain how we can become members of such communities (See Hauerwas and Wadell 1982:321–322, Scheffler 1983:447). He attempts to satisfy both of these criticisms in his next book, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* where he argues for the superiority of the Thomistic strand of Christian tradition and supplies us with specific guidelines for judging among different traditions.

Before I turn to a careful analysis of the latter, let us bring into the picture an important critique of MacIntyre's project by Jeffrey Stout. Stout identifies MacIntyre's philosophy as a version of skepticism and nihilism.[4] Moreover, Stout charges MacIntyre with scrutinizing the Enlightenment "through the Enlightenment's eyes" (1984:270). What Stout implies here is that MacIntyre views the accomplishments of the Enlightenment thinkers in their own terms, i.e., taking as a matter of fact that liberal society was individualistic and founded on philosophical assumptions as the eighteenth-century philosophers thought. On the contrary, says Stout, we ought to appreciate the Enlightenment for such achievements as the concept of human rights or respect for persons.[5] We must conceive these ideas not as ahistorical or arrived at from

[3] If in *After Virtue* Alasdair MacIntyre called modern times "dark ages" and identified a tradition of virtue as existing among "some Catholic Irish, some Orthodox Greeks, and some Jews of an Orthodox persuasion" (1984:252), in *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* he advocates a broader definition of such communities as he identifies them with the Thomistic strand of Christianity (1988:402–404).

[4] Stout 1988:216. Notice how neatly this categorization fits the distinctions introduced by Bernstein in the quotation opening this paper.

[5] One of the most significant achievements of that time is what Stout calls a "thin conception of good" upon which most people could agree "until something better comes along." (1984:271).

neutral ground but rather as "conceptual expressions of institutions and compromises *pragmatically* justified under historical circumstances" (Stout 1984:271). Thus, the failure of the Enlightenment project is to be judged not in terms of its social practices but with regard to its flawed epistemology, that is, foundationalism. In spite of this penetrating criticism, MacIntyre continues to view the Enlightenment from the same perspective in his *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* His account there is still superior to that presented in *After Virtue* since now he discusses the means of adjudicating between different traditions.

TRADITIONS AND RATIONALITY

In his chapter on "The Rationality of Traditions," MacIntyre argues that there is no "set of independent standards of rational justification by appeal to which the issues between contending traditions can be decided" (1988:351). This is not to say, claims MacIntyre, that different traditions have nothing in common with regard to rational justification. In fact, he admits that they all adhere to the laws of logic both in theory and practice.[6] The problem, however, comes from the fact that such agreements are insufficient to resolve their divisions. For, continues MacIntyre, each tradition has its own standards of reasoning and its own background beliefs to which it can appeal. Is MacIntyre therefore left with a choice between either perspectivism or relativism?[7] To the contrary, he rejects both. MacIntyre believes that perspectivism and relativism are "an inverted mirror image" of the Enlightenment when they claim to be the only viable options

[6] Notice that already in his introductory chapter, MacIntyre states that "observance of the laws of logic is only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for rationality, whether theoretical or practical" (1988:4).

[7] MacIntyre defines the relativist challenge as "a denial that rational debate between and rational choice among rival traditions is possible" and states that the perspectivist challenge "puts in question the possibility of making truth claims from within any tradition" (1988:352).

(1988:353). In addition, they ignore the fact that when one genuinely adheres to a particular standpoint one is no longer free to adopt another so long as one's view is still satisfying (MacIntyre 1988:367). Perspectivism and relativism are objectionable also because they provide no means to judge between rival traditions when the tradition one follows becomes inadequate. (MacIntyre 1988:366).

What direction is MacIntyre then going? He wants to avoid the false option suggested by perspectivism and relativism and pointed out so well by Bernstein. Rather, he aspires to reject foundationalism and accept historicism but without its relativizing tendency. What he opts for is, to put it in his own terms, "a tradition-constituted and tradition-constitutive enquiry" (1988:354). In order to explore this concept, we must first get acquainted with his understanding of the stages of development within a tradition.[8] At first, the sources of authority in a given tradition are accepted without any challenge. In the second stage, however, such authorities are put into question but there is no satisfactory answer available. This happens when, even according to its own standard of tradition-constituted rationality, a particular tradition comes to the conclusion that it fails to make progress (MacIntyre 1988:362). The old methods of enquiry are unable to settle debates between conflicting theories. At this stage, states MacIntyre, tradition is experiencing an "epistemological crisis." The solution to such a crisis (which initiates the third stage in the history of the tradition) must fulfill the following requirements:

> First, this in some ways radically new and conceptually enriched scheme ... must furnish a solution to the problems which had previously proved intractable in a systematic and coherent way. Second, it must also provide an explanation of just what it was which rendered the

[8] Note the similarities between what follows and the development of scientific paradigms as proposed by Kuhn.

> tradition ... sterile or incoherent or both. And third, these first two tasks must be carried out in a way which exhibits *some fundamental continuity* of the new conceptual and theoretical structures with the shared beliefs in terms of which the tradition of enquiry had been defined up to this point. (MacIntyre 1988:362, italics mine)

In spite of the fact that MacIntyre insists on "some fundamental continuity" between the new conceptual scheme and the old one, he affirms in the same breath that due to its superior richness, the new scheme is in no way derivable from the earlier one since it is a product of a creative work within the community. The situation gets more complicated when the new scheme is taken from an altogether alien tradition. Such a rival tradition "does not stand in any sort of *substantive continuity* with the preceding history of the tradition in crisis" (MacIntyre 1988:365, italics mine). Yet MacIntyre states at the same time that one is able to judge the alien tradition as "superior in rationality and in respect of its claims to truth to their own" (1988:365). How is it possible for us to judge the rationality of competing traditions if there is no substantial continuity between them? Has not MacIntyre himself already asserted that the standards of rationality which traditions might share are not sufficient to resolve disagreements (1988:351)? Part of the difficulty in the present discussion comes from the ambiguity of such terms as "sufficient agreement" or "substantive continuity" (Cf. Mehl 1991:36). He clarifies for us some of this ambiguity in his discussion on "Tradition and Translation."

TRANSLATABILITY OF TRADITIONS

MacIntyre opens this chapter by engaging in a conversation with Donald Davidson and his view of translatability of rival traditions. He understands Davidson to assert that different traditions share standards of rational evaluation which allow them to settle disagreements. MacIntyre believes that for Davidson translatability

entails commensurability. Since Davidson states that people should be able to understand each other "in principle," MacIntyre thinks that this could be also interpreted as "saying no more than what would be conceded, I take it, by anyone: that there will always be something in common between any two languages or any sets of thoughts" (1988:371). Davidson is a leading philosopher in the debate over conceptual schemes and I will discuss his position later. At this stage, it is important for us to understand that if MacIntyre sees that there might be "something in common" between the languages of two different traditions, he at the same time believes that they might be logically incompatible *and* incommensurable (1988:351).

Let us have a closer look at his argument. MacIntyre makes the important point that there is no language-as-such—i.e., English-as-such or Latin-as-such. Instead, languages have their boundaries in particular social communities. Hence, one should not really speak of the-fourteenth-century-language-as-such but rather of the-fourteenth-century-English-of-Lancashire-and-surrounding-districts. This is a significant distinction to make for MacIntyre since he argues that the learning of a language and familiarity with the culture of that language are not separate but belong to the same category of activities (1988:374). In order to learn a language of another culture in the above sense one has to "become a child all over again" and learn a second language in-use or a "second first language." Only a person who has acquired another language as a "second first language" will be able to realize that those two languages might be in some ways untranslatable. This is not to say that two languages (or two rival traditions) cannot have much in common. To the contrary, they could share: "texts, modes of evaluation, whole practices, such as games, crafts, and sciences" (MacIntyre 1988:387). The areas which two alien traditions have in common do not make difficulties for translation, however, the less that is shared, the more opportunities for untranslatability. Yet, those who have learned the language-in-use of another tradition,

> may discover that while in some area of greater or lesser importance they cannot comprehend it within the terms of reference set by their own beliefs, their own history, and their own language-in-use, it provides a standpoint from which once they have acquired its language-in-use as a second first language, the limitations, incoherencies, and poverty of resources of their own beliefs can be identified, characterized, and explained in a way not possible from within their own tradition. (MacIntyre 1988:388)

It follows, continues MacIntyre, that only a person with a knowledge of the second first language is able to judge whether the other tradition is rationally superior to one's own. The rest of us will have to simply accept the fact that it is possible that we will not be able to comprehend adequately another tradition, for there are always potentialities for untranslatability. In fact, according to MacIntyre, the belief that we are capable of understanding everything in human culture and history notwithstanding the differences is one of the products of modernity (1988:385). This optimistic assumption is, however, very misleading and leads to our misunderstanding of many traditions.

MacIntyre gives an example of two incommensurable and incompatible sets of beliefs when he entertains the possibility of a translation of an opening line from an ode of Horace written in Latin into the Hebrew of the first century BCE Jewish community in Palestine. This line reads as follows, "We have believed that Juppiter [sic] thundering reigns in the sky; Augustus will be held a present divinity ... " (MacIntyre 1988:380). He concludes that since such a piece of poetry would have been recognized as false and blasphemous by the Jews, they would have to regard such gods as evil spirits. Although MacIntyre is correct in his interpretation of the probable Jewish reaction, how does this prove the untranslatability of such a phrase? Could we not assume just the opposite, i.e., that the Jews were able to translate that line suc-

cessfully and this is the reason why they would find it blasphemous?[9] Among the other examples of untranslatability, MacIntyre lists an instance when

> Greek lacked certain resources possessed by Hebrew before the Septuagint's translators partially transformed Greek but also that Hebrew till later still lacked philosophical resources which Greek itself had to acquire through a radical set of linguistic innovations, themselves deeply alien to archaic Greek. (1988:375)

Should this instance be even considered as a case of untranslatability *per se*? All MacIntyre could argue from the facts mentioned above is that at times there are no resources to achieve an adequate translation but that by itself does not prove untranslatability as such. Jeffrey Stout is correct when he states that such temporary untranslatability may be dealt with by hermeneutical innovation. He explains it further, "If, at a given time, a proposition expressible in one language L_1, is not expressible in another, L_2, this need not be so at some later time. L_2, after all, can be developed hermeneutically" (1988:64). As a result, one cannot, *a priori*, eliminate the possibility that those concepts which are currently untranslatable will remain thus. It seems that MacIntyre fails to appreciate the dynamic and fluid nature of languages which allows us to enrich them hermeneutically and consequently improve our ability to communicate in ways we were not able to previously.

Moreover, I agree with Donald Davidson, that the concept of language which is not translatable is simply nonsensical. It is difficult to imagine a criterion of languagehood which would not imply the translatability into familiar terms (Davidson 1991:192). All we can imagine is the breakdown of translation in rather

[9] See an insightful criticism of MacIntyre's concept of untranslatability in Fowl 1991:1–20.

limited areas and only when translation on a large scale is possible can we recognize those localized failures.

TRADITIONS AND INCOMMENSURABILITY

What are we then to make of MacIntyre's claim of the incommensurability of different traditions? It will be helpful to explore this whole problem in dialogue with Donald Davidson and Nicholas Rescher. Stephen E. Fowl suggests that MacIntyre misinterprets Davidson when he takes the latter to mean that translatability does not entail commensurability. Had MacIntyre engaged in a close reading of Davidson's texts, argues Fowl, he would have seen that this is not the case. I am afraid, however, that it is Fowl who should have spent more time reading Davidson carefully. It is true, as Fowl points out, that Davidson while discussing his principle of charity[10] states that "this method [principle of charity] is not designed to eliminate disagreement, nor can it; its purpose is to make meaningful disagreement possible, and this depends on a foundation—some foundation—in agreement" (Davidson 1991:197). Fowl infers from this that Davidson acknowledges that although translatability entails a large amount of agreement, different traditions are commensurable only on a limited scale. Fowl stretches the meaning of what Davidson and MacIntyre say. He states that MacIntyre is primarily interested in showing that translatability does not entail commensurability. But MacIntyre's interests (even primary ones) are much larger than that. MacIntyre makes it very clear that, according to him, two different languages might be untranslatable in some areas. Since he allows that a person who acquired a second first language is able to realize such untranslatability, how can he deny that such an individual is already involved in a process of successful translation? Does not a person who is immersed in an

[10] The principle of charity postulates the assumption of general agreement on beliefs. See Davidson 1991:152–153,168–169,196–197.

alien culture and applies its language-in-use testify to the fact that languages are in principle translatable? Why could not such a person, moreover, help others to understand that other culture and accompany them in a process of a successful translation? If MacIntyre disagrees, (and I think he does) it is precisely because he believes that two different traditions do not share *enough* in common, i.e. they are incommensurable. Fowl is wrong again to assume that Davidson's system allows for incommensurability in that sense. For to accept the presence of disagreements (as Davidson does) does not necessarily entail the concept of incommensurability. Although MacIntyre does not adhere to a strict incommensurability in Kuhnian sense, yet he argues for its softer version that allows for radical differences between the two rival traditions which are incommensurable (1988:351).[11] Contrary to Fowl, I want to argue that both MacIntyre and Davidson closely tie translatability and commensurability. According to MacIntyre, untranslatability happens because two different traditions have incompatible and at times even incommensurable beliefs.[12] Davidson, on the other hand, claims that "the failure of intertranslatability is a necessary condition for difference of conceptual schemes" (1991:191). He elaborates this statement while discussing Kuhn's concept of incommensurability by explaining that "incommensurable" is Kuhn's and Feyerbend's word for "not

[11] MacIntyre believes that Kuhn, in order to be consistent with his concept of the scientific revolution, would have to claim not only that the followers of rival paradigms disagree but that "every relevant area of rationality is invaded by that disagreement." MacIntyre rejects Kuhn's view for he believes that there is some historical continuity between those paradigms. To assert that everything is put to question or that there is no rational continuity is to follow a failed Cartesian epistemology. See MacIntyre 1977:465–468.

[12] MacIntyre 1988:380. When MacIntyre talks about incompatible beliefs he means here that they are logically incompatible, that is, those beliefs which exclude certain concepts from one tradition from having applicability in another. Incommensurable beliefs, on the other hand, do not have the same standards for truth, falsity and rational justification.

intertranslatable." Since Davidson firmly upholds intertranslatability it is obvious that he would reject incommensurability as understood by Kuhn and Feyerbend, as entailing untranslatability (Cf. Wallace 1986:232–233). But is not incommensurability, as understood by MacIntyre, exactly this kind of disagreement? I believe so.

But the real problem has to do with an important aspect of Davidson's thought which both MacIntyre and Fowl overlook. Fowl quotes Davidson who states that it would be wrong to conclude from his (Davidson's) work that people share a common conceptual scheme (Fowl 1991:17, fn. 3). What Fowl chooses not to incorporate in his article is a sentence just before the one quoted by him where Davidson says that "we have found no intelligible basis on which it can be said that schemes are different."[13] Thus if Davidson does not claim that there is one conceptual scheme neither does he think that we can reasonably assert the multiplicity of schemes. This might provide us with a helpful correction of Fowl's interpretation but how are we to understand Davidson? I believe that the following quotation will foster our solution to this dilemma:

> If translation succeeds, we have shown there is no need to speak of two conceptual schemes, while if translation fails, there is no ground for speaking of two. If I am right then, there never can be a situation in which we can intelligibly compare or contrast divergent schemes, and in that case we do better not to say that there is one scheme, as if we

[13] Davidson 1991:198. Richard Rorty charges Davidson with misinterpretation of Kuhn's thought at that very point. See Rorty 1979:316 and chapter seven, section 1 for a more thorough critique. What Rorty finds objectionable about Davidson's equation of "commensurable" and "signing the same meaning to terms" is the fact that there is great ambiguity in understanding of the idea "sameness of meaning." Cf. his discussion in chapter six, section 3. Davidson is not the only philosopher who interprets Kuhn along those lines. For a similar view see Putnam 1987:191–196.

> understood what it would be like for there to be more. (Davidson 1980:243)

What Davidson is attempting here is to do away with any distinction between scheme and content. This dualism, just as the dichotomy between analytic and synthetic truths, is, for him, untenable. Davidson conceives conceptual schemes as a third dogma (first two had to do with analytic and synthetic truths) of empiricism, which is as erroneous as its predecessors. I think that Davidson follows W. V. O. Quine and Wilfrid Sellars who also want to dispose of the distinction between analytic and synthetic truths, theory and abstraction, or fact and value. Quine and Sellars argue that all we can assert about any particular expression is to identify how it is used. After that is accomplished, nothing else remains to be said (Stout 1981:17–20). But it should be pointed out that this holistic approach does not claim that human knowledge has in fact no "foundations," rather it simply asks "whether it makes sense to suggest that it does—whether the idea of epistemic or moral authority having a 'ground' in nature is a coherent one" (Rorty 1979:178). I believe that Davidson's line of argument is similar in that he wants to argue against the separation between truth and meaning. A conceptual scheme defined as a notion of "fitting the totality of the experience" does not, for him, add anything intelligible to the simple concept of being true. Thus, he states:

> Our attempt to characterize languages or conceptual schemes in terms of the notion of fitting some entity has come down, then, to the simple thought that something is an acceptable conceptual scheme or theory if it is true. Perhaps we better say *largely* true in order to allow sharers of a scheme to differ on details. And the criterion of a conceptual scheme different from our own now becomes: largely true but not translatable. The question whether this is a useful criterion is just the question how well we

> understand the notion of truth, as applied to language, independent of the notion of translation. The answer is, I think, that we do not understand it independently at all. (Davidson 1991:194)

Hence, Davidson, claims that the notion of a conceptual scheme is altogether disposable. He wants to do away with what Sellars calls "Myth of the Given" and Rorty "the Thing-in-Itself, the World." For Davidson, the theory of meaning is closely related to the theory of truth. It can be argued that he still does not prove that there is no language that is true and yet untranslatable. All he really shows here is that we cannot verify the truth claims of a particular language unless they are translatable into our own.[14] This is correct in a fashion similar to the argument developed by Quine and Sellars. They too could not prove that there are no foundations to our knowledge. All they could say is that the idea of foundations is incoherent to them; they do not know how to talk about it. Such is the case with Davidson. When he talks about truth, all he says is how the term 'truth' functions, what it can and cannot do.[15] The fact that he is not able to prove that true untranslatable languages cannot exist is not so shattering since his opponents cannot prove that such languages do exist.[16]

[14] For a critique of Davidson's view on translation, see Rescher 1980:314–328. Cf. Wallace 1986:230–234.

[15] I agree here with Rorty's interpretation of Davidson. See Rorty 1979:301–311, esp. 311.

[16] Rorty believes that such an argument is inconclusive but claims that the burden of proof is on skeptic's side. His argument is as follows, "(1) the skeptic suggests that our own beliefs ... have viable alternatives which unfortunately can never be known to hold but which justify the suspension of judgment; (2) the anti-skeptic replies that the very meaning of the terms used shows that the alternatives suggested are not merely dubious but in principle unverifiable, and thus not reasonable alternatives at all; (3) the skeptic rejoins that verificationism confuses the *ordo essendi* with the *ordo cognoscendi* and that it may well be that some alternative is true even though we shall never know that it is; (4) the anti-skeptic replies that the matter is not worth debating until the skeptic spells out the suggested alternative in full detail, and insinuates that this cannot be done; (5) the controversy degenerates into a dispute about

In the light of this discussion, it seems to me, that Davidson would strongly affirm the commensurability between different languages or traditions.[17] His argument seems convincing but before we embrace his view we ought to take a careful look at MacIntyre's and Rescher's disagreements with such a position. In his recent book, *Three Rival Versions of Moral Enquiry*, MacIntyre gives an example of two incommensurable traditions, that of Aristotle and that of Galileo and Newton. He states,

> From the standpoint afforded by the modified Aristotelian physics of late medieval impetus theory, for example, it has appeared that no rational progress could have been made towards and to the physics of Galileo and Newton, precisely because the systematically different and incompatible observation languages, key concepts, and

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assuming the burden of proof, with the skeptic claiming that it is not up to him to build up a coherent story around his suggested alternative but rather up to the anti-skeptic to show *a priori* that this cannot be done" (Rorty 1989:7). In final analysis, Rorty thinks that the skeptic's challenge is referring to "the world" which is either purely vacuous notion" or "a name for the objects that inquiry at the moment is leaving alone" (1989:14). Cf. Rorty 1979:306–311.

[17] Although Davidson speaks about indeterminacy in translation which might be present between the two languages, this does not affect his view of commensurability. Here is how he describes "indeterminacy", "Let someone say (and now discourse is direct), 'There's a hippopotamus in the refrigerator'; am I necessarily right in reporting him as having said that there is a hippopotamus in the refrigerator? Perhaps; but under questioning he goes on, 'It's roundish, has a wrinkled skin, does not mind being touched. It has a pleasant taste at least the juice, and it costs a dime. I squeeze two or three for breakfast.' ... The simplest hypothesis so far is that my word 'hippopotamus' no longer translates his word 'hippopotamus'; my word 'orange' might do better." Davidson tries to communicate here that one can find himself debating over many non-synonymous ways to translate the word "hippopotamus" simply because at this stage it is difficult (i.e., there is not enough information) to decide what the best translation should be like. He believes that in such cases we ought to follow the translation which maximizes agreement. See 1991:100–101.

> theoretical structures were framed in terms of rival and *incompatible* standards and there was *no* shared *common* measure. (MacIntyre 1990:118)

MacIntyre disagrees with Feyerbend's approach in which such a scenario implies that Galileo had to arrive at his conclusions in non-rational way. For in spite of this incommensurability, says MacIntyre, it is possible to argue retrospectively from the latter system to the former and thus the followers of Galileo could have (at least theoretically) pointed out the shortcomings of the Aristotelian physics and the successful solutions available in their system. Moreover, following such retrospective thinking, we are able to justify rationally this transition from one system to the other by appealing both to the shortcomings of the previous tradition and to the explanatory power of the latter. But how would such a retrospective exercise help us to make choices among the alternative positions available to us currently? Here is what MacIntyre suggests. He believes that when the tradition experiences an epistemological crisis due to intractable difficulties within the system, the members of this tradition have a good rationale for searching for alternative solutions. In order to do so, one would have to get acquainted with another culture (learn the second first language) and learn "to understand the other incommensurable point of view from within imaginatively, before it can be occupied intellectually" (MacIntyre 1990:120). It is through such a work of imagination that we are able to become a part of this other culture and as a result redescribe our own tradition from the point of view of the alien culture. This new understanding of our culture might allow us to see our inadequacies and the superiority of the explanations offered by the rival tradition.[18]

[18] MacIntyre 1990:120. This of course, will be the case only if the other tradition will in fact appear as superior in some or most of the areas.

Nicholas Rescher shares MacIntyre's view that other traditions might employ terms, concepts and categories which differ substantially from our own. Against Davidson, Rescher argues that there are, in fact, alternative schemes. The differences between such schemes have to do with the fact that they embody not only different theories about the same data but rather they entail different theories about different set of facts (Rescher 1980:331). It is not that those different conceptual schemes differ in their determination of truth-values T and F; instead the real difference comes from the fact that "some truth-determinations from the angle of one scheme are simply *indeterminate* from that of the other in that it has *nothing whatsoever* to say on the matter" (Rescher 1980:332). Thus, two alternative schemes vary not in their truth assignment to overlapping theses but they rather have diverse modes of classification, description and explanation (i.e., different conceptualities) of the nonoverlapping theses.

Let us consider an example of such different conceptualities. Rescher refers to Galenic and Pasteurian medicine. He states that in certain areas these two approaches converse about different subject matter, the kind of subject which cannot be recognized by the other tradition at all. For Pasteurian scholars no longer derive their practices from the theory of four humors and the physicians in the Galenic tradition do not interpret microbiology from a different perspective; instead they simply do not refer to bacteria or other microbes at all. Those two areas (theory of four humors and microbiology) lie, therefore, "entirely beyond their conceptual horizon" (Rescher 1980:332). Such alternative schemes,

> strictly speaking, ... do not disagree. They do not involve the sort of logical conflict that arises when one body of commitments says one thing and another something else about the same item and the two statements are incompatible. ... Rather, they conflict in the manner of diverse instrumentalities—the manner in which we cannot make effective concurrent use of hammer and saw. It is the

> sort of practical incompatibility that is at issue with diverse conceptual schemes rather than the theoretical incompatibility of mutual contradiction. (Rescher 1980:340)

Thus, in the final analysis, the difference between two alternative schemes has to do with the way they function, i.e., it is their practical and not theoretical aspect which makes them incompatible or even incommensurable. I do not think, however, that Rescher remains consistent in claiming this for he also states that "Different schemes talk about things differently—*and do this not just in terms of disagreement about the same things* but also in terms of mooting altogether different sorts of things" (Rescher 1980:341, italics mine). In addition, Rescher states that such different schemes are incommensurable (in a Feyerbendian sense) with regard to their meaning-content assertions which seems to imply their theoretical incommensurability as well.

Both MacIntyre and Rescher present us with a compelling account of incommensurable traditions or schemes. How are we to judge between their arguments and those of Davidson? I believe that Robert Kraut brings some insightful assessments of Rescher's position (it follows that this critique applies to MacIntyre as well). Kraut posits a very pointed question: "But in saying that his [Caesar's] conceptual scheme is distinct from ours, what do we thereby add to the bare behavioristic claim that he fails to hold true or false such sentences?" (1986:404). To utilize examples mentioned earlier, we can agree with MacIntyre and Rescher in asserting that Aristotelian physics or Galenic medicine lack altogether the later concepts developed by their successors, correspondingly, Newton and Pasteur. This, however, allows us only to recognize that Aristotle or Galen would not have been able to take a rational stand towards those later innovations; they could neither reject them nor accept them. What is missing in Rescher's argument is a proof that such distinction between different concepts would improve one's position to make judgments about

truth. His argument, as it is, allows us to arrive at a simple observation that in the case of Aristotle and Newton they each hold different concepts as true. This remark is not very useful because it does not account very well for why Aristotle is not able to have a proper (or true) concept of physics. Kraut is again very helpful in unfolding of this argument,

> [Aristotle][19] learns to use the word by learning to make true assertions which contain the word. *Ex hypothesi*, [Aristotle] lacks the relevant sentential skills. Thus he lacks the appropriate concepts. The appeal to an alternative scheme does not usefully explain this sentential impotence on his part. Don't say: he doesn't have attitudes towards such sentences. That's true, in a way, but not useful; for his lacking the concept amounts to his lacking the disposition to have attitudes toward such sentences. The imputation of an alternative conceptual scheme to [Aristotle] *presupposes*, rather than explains, [Aristotle's] impoverished sentential attitudes. (Kraut 1986:404)

In other words, we are still left with an open question as to the reason why we should even consider Aristotle's position as characterized by "impoverished sentential attitudes." The Davidsonian view is therefore more convincing since his theory allows us to come back to the notion of testability of truth and gives a satisfying answer to our present dilemma.[20] Davidson would reply that Aristotle's sentential attitudes were impoverished because they did not hold *true* in the light of further discoveries. Thus, to return to

[19] In Kraut's text, he discusses Caesar, but for the purpose of the continuity of our discussion I have inserted "Aristotle" for "Caesar."

[20] Kraut still thinks that Rescher is right insofar as some of the sentences formed in one scheme might not be available in another but he blames Rescher for not tackling with the importance of such distinctions for "language's referential apparatus" (1986:404). For Kraut's modification of Davidson's view which takes into consideration Rescher's point, see the same article (414–416).

the assertion made by Rescher and MacIntyre, Davidson could say that the traditions they juxtaposed were not incommensurable but rather that Newton's and Pasteur's theories were superior to their predecessors with regard to their description and explanatory power of the reality.

Are then two rival theories commensurable or not? It would be helpful at this stage to define our term "commensurability." According to Davidson, two different systems are commensurable when they are translatable, and as it was pointed out, Davidson believes that all systems are in principle translatable and thus are commensurable. How about MacIntyre? I think that MacIntyre is tying his view of incommensurability closely to that of translation as well. But he comes to an opposite conclusion since he holds that two languages/traditions might be untranslatable and therefore incommensurable. His position is difficult to grasp. MacIntyre acknowledges, on one hand, that a person who knows the second first language is able to judge the rival tradition and that would suggest that that person was able to translate such tradition successfully. This, however, does not seem to be so according to MacIntyre. He wants to affirm, instead, that only such a person can witness the untranslatability of the languages. How are we to make sense of this line of argument? I think that MacIntyre's approach should be seen in the larger context of his work. He perceives a moral agent as an actor who plays a role given him by a particular community he inhabits. Such an agent is not only an actor but also an author. MacIntyre cautions us at this point that "what the agent is able to do and say intelligibly as an actor is deeply affected by the fact that we are never more (and sometimes less) than the co-authors of our own narratives" (1984:213). Although he allows for an individual to transcend the limitations of her community by tradition-constituted rationality, it is never all that clear what this process entails when this transcendence involves a change to a rival tradition (MacIntyre 1984:221). It is certain that such a person must become a speaker of the language-in-use, but even that person is not able to translate for herself one

tradition in terms of another. MacIntyre attempts to show that an individual, who is acquainted with the rival tradition in the above sense, becomes an actor of this new narrative in an imaginative sense. Recall, however, that MacIntyre believes that such a person can judge tradition rationally and decide the superiority of one tradition over another. This is precisely where his account has its weakest point. How is such a person able to judge (rationally) two traditions if even she is not able to translate one into another and if there is not enough substantial continuity between the two systems? I think that MacIntyre assumes that a choice between the two traditions happens by comparing their two narratives: the one the person presently follows and the other, rival, which this person inhabits in an imaginative way. Thus, such a moral agent is already an actor playing a very real role in the narrative of her own community and at the same time assuming an imaginative new role in the tradition of the alien community. The question still remains what is the basis of such a choice? If, as MacIntyre claims, it is a rational choice how can it be made without a person's ability to translate one tradition into another?

Although MacIntyre's view creates a number of difficulties, it is clear that he believes that rival traditions are incommensurable. This incommensurability involves for him untranslatability which consequently implies the presence of alternative conceptual schemes. The latter are, however, proven wrong by Davidson. MacIntyre's failed account of rationality is, thus, tied closely to his mistaken notion of untranslatability. We simply do not understand what it is like when untranslatability in principle is taken as a matter of fact. The only way we can evaluate and interact with others is when we presuppose that communication is in principle possible. His downplaying of the agreements between different traditions endangers the concept of what communication means altogether. MacIntyre seems to ignore what Davidson never tires of pointing out: that "disagreement and agreement alike are intelligible only against a background of *massive* agreement" (Davidson 1991:137, italics mine). This "principle of charity"

must not be seen as an option but rather

> a condition of having a workable theory, it is meaningless to suggest massive error by endorsing it. Until we have successfully established a systematic correlation of sentences held true, there are no mistakes to make. *Charity is forced on us; whether we like it or not, if we want to understand others, we must count them right in most matters*. If we can produce a theory that reconciles charity and the formal conditions for a theory, we have done all that could be done to ensure communications. Nothing more is possible, and nothing more is needed. (Davidson 1991:197)

MacIntyre fails to understand this profound truth about the way we communicate. Stephen Fowl thinks that MacIntyre's position can be easily improved by the "relatively cheap concession" of admitting that a disagreement in order to be real does not have to be total. All MacIntyre needs to do, says Fowl, is to "tone down his rhetorical claims about dark ages" (Fowl 1991:10–11). This, however, is not enough. To admit that total disagreement on any topic is impossible is trivial. What MacIntyre would need to acknowledge is that there is a *massive* agreement between traditions and languages and that MacIntyre is not ready to do (and even if he would ever be, such concession is no longer cheap).

What are we to conclude then? Are rival traditions commensurable? I agree with Davidson that all languages and consequently all rival traditions are *in principle* translatable and therefore commensurable. But if this is so, how could we explain the fact (as suggested by MacIntyre) that it is impossible at times to judge such traditions and determine which one of them is superior? It seems to me that this situation is caused by a temporary and localized inability to translate the language of one tradition into that of another due to the lack of adequate hermeneutical tools. Hence one could not really count this as a case of untranslatable or incommensurable traditions.

Even if we accept the fact that the rival traditions are in principle commensurable, how are we to determine the superiority of a particular tradition? I think it is helpful to keep in the back of our minds the fact that the lack of those shared standards for a rational agreement does not mean that we do not have a wide consensus on a great variety of issues. As Davidson points out those agreements are massive. For instance when we discuss what is good there are limitations to the sort of criteria we would apply in our considerations. R. W. Beardsmore recognizes correctly that "although it is not possible to exclude *a priori* any feature of an object as a possible criterion of its goodness, we can say that if anything is to count as a criterion, then it must in principle be possible to see some relationship between it and the other things which count as criteria of goodness."[21] Thus, it is helpful to acknowledge both the extent of our disagreements and the vast number of issues we agree about. I think that Stout's concept of "moral bricolage" is helpful at this point. Stout borrows the term *bricoleur* from Levi-Strauss who used it in the sense of "heterogeneous repertoire of inherited bits and pieces" (Stout 1988:74). *Bricoleur* has to do with "whatever is at hand,"

> with set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project, or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions.[22]

[21] Beardsmore 1969:35. Beardsmore acknowledges that at times it will not be possible to pinpoint such relationships (for instance when the other society differs from ours in their set of beliefs) but at least it is achievable in principle.

[22] Stout 1988:74. Stout is aware that Levi-Strauss applied bricoleur to illustrate how a primitive mind operates but Stout rejects Levi-Strauss' distinction between the savage and civilized minds. Instead, he believes that all of us are capable of creative thought in the sense implied by bricoleur.

Stout believes that our pluralistic societies have plenty of the moral resources at hand; the kind of resources we all share and from which we all profit. I think Stout is right to emphasize the richness of the moral traditions we are influenced by and the need to see that richness as something we ought to treasure and explore rather than complain about. For it is not necessarily true, as MacIntyre insists, that most of us, who live between and betwixt diverse traditions, must be led to 'fundamental incoherence.'[23] What he perceives as mere fragmentation, 'compartmentalization of the self' and troublesome tolerance of different rationalities could be recognized as an opportunity for an enriching interaction between the diversity of our moral backgrounds in search for more satisfying solutions to our moral problems (MacIntyre 1988:397). It is not to deny that the diversity of moral views and traditions might create a milieu where (by the very fact of this variety) the possibility of choosing incoherent beliefs is somewhat greater than in other times but such diversity does not by itself produce such incoherence. Moreover, we ought to realize that such a situation creates an equal opportunity for selecting moral traditions which will bring more coherence and order into our lives.

MacIntyre values greatly the achievement of Thomas Aquinas, his creative construal of the system of morality based on Aristotelian and Augustinian insights. Is MacIntyre forgetting that Aquinas' work was enriched by his encounter with other traditions such as Platonic, Stoic, Pauline, Jewish and Islamic influences (Cf. Stout 1988:76)? Aquinas is therefore an example of a person who utilized wisely and imaginatively the resources available to him. And if Aquinas was successful in doing so why at least theoretically should we not be able to follow his example? Even if we accept that MacIntyre's view of incommensurability is correct, his account of our ability to transcend a particular tradition or to

[23] For a critique of MacIntyre on this point, see Stout 1989:231–2.

adjudicate between two rival traditions is both confusing and misleading. As I already pointed out, this state is partially caused by his inferior concept of translatability. I believe that the insurmountable problems in his account of untranslatability lead him to equally ambiguous notion of rationality. Nobody would want to argue against his claim that rationality is affected by traditions we are a part of. What is deeply unsettling about MacIntyre's project is that although he states that a person can judge two alien traditions rationally, he never explains just how this happens. Calling for learning a second first language and imaginative inhabiting another culture might be necessary but is not enough for an adequate relation of this process. One wonders if MacIntyre is guilty of binding rationality so close to tradition that he has limited (contrary to what he himself claims) our ability for rational assessment.[24] Hilary Putnam in his compelling account of our rationality, points out that our conceptualities are influenced by our biology and culture and therefore are not value-free. At the same time he acknowledges, that such conceptions "define a kind of objectivity, *objectivity for us*, even if it is not the metaphysical objectivity of the God's Eye view. Objectivity and rationality humanly speaking are what we have; they are better than nothing."[25] MacIntyre seems to underscore the objective

[24] For a critique of MacIntyre's concept of rationality see Mehl 1991:21–54. Cf. review article of *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, Bradley 1990:324–326. Ian Markham, contrary to most of the other critics, charges MacIntyre with giving rationality too great a role within a tradition. According to Markham, many traditions and especially religious traditions are closed to a inter-subjective dialogue and therefore MacIntyre's tradition-constituted rationality ignores "the internal explanations for the existence of other traditions." Markham's critique, however, smacks of foundationalism and therefore is not that interesting for the purpose of this paper. See his 1991:259–267. Markham gives a fuller explanation of his position on rationality in his 1989:1–12.

[25] Putnam 1981:55. For Putnam's list of desiderata for moral system (which are almost coextensive with his system of rational procedure) see his 1987:202.

value of rationality which allows us to transcend and assess different traditions.

Although I do not think that MacIntyre is correct when he asserts that different rival traditions we are faced with are often incommensurable, I think that he is right in insisting that those various traditions, when translated into our language, might seem to us equally coherent and could leave us with a sense that our choice is relative and that the moral options we are presented with should be equally appreciated and advanced.[26] I agree with MacIntyre that this conclusion is an illusion and the matters at hand have a quite different reality.

ASSESSMENTS OF TRADITIONS

Nicholas Rescher proposes that what we need to compare in competing systems is their *pragmatic efficacy*. He cites C. I. Lewis to make his point more evident and I think that a few excerpts from this large quotation appropriate for our discussion:

> [T]he point of the pragmatic theory is, I take it, the responsiveness of truth to human bent or need, and the fact that in some sense it is made by mind. ... When this is so, choice will be determined, consciously or unconsciously, on pragmatic grounds. New facts may cause a shifting of such grounds. When historically such change of interpretation takes place *we shall genuinely have new truth*, whose newness represents the creative power of human thought and the ruling consideration of human purpose. ... In this middle ground of trial and error, of expanding experience and the continual shift and modification of conception in our effort to cope with it, the drama of human interpretation and the control of nature is forever being played.[27]

[26] I use "incommensurable" in the Davidsonian sense here.

[27] C. I. Lewis, *Mind and the World Order*, quoted in Rescher 1980:342, italics mine. Not surprisingly, C. I. Lewis adheres to the notion of alternative conceptual schemes which I would reject. For the purpose of my argument, however, this disagreement does not make much difference. Basil Mitchell

Thus, according to Rescher and Lewis, evaluation of competing traditions should be grounded in their practical relevancy for our lives. As we gather more information both about our current philosophy of life and about other rival systems we are able to weigh by 'trial and error' the value of the resources which they provide us with. Notice, that Lewis takes those newly discovered and more satisfying solutions as genuine new truths. This, I think, is an important point, for it allows us to relate this theory of pragmatic testability of various traditions with Davidson's appeal to the criteria of truth for assessing different systems. In the final analysis, the search for a superior tradition is a search for a system which is more adequate, which has the greatest explanatory power for the questions of our lives. As much as I appreciate Rescher's suggestion, I also would like to point out some faulty assumptions in his reasoning. I already indicated his somewhat confused argument for practical rather than theoretical incompatibility of the rival systems. If I find Rescher's appeal to the criteria of functional efficacy attractive, it is because I believe that a system which is overall superior will encompass both theoretical and practical superiority. Our quest for a truthful tradition which we want to inhabit is, however, closely related to praxis—i.e., to put it in Rescher's terms, "it is the practical issue of how effectively they [systems][28] enable us to find our way amid

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made a similar point about human needs and their tie to rationality (while discussing morality); " if ... we place morality in the context of human needs and insist that moral judgments require to be supported by reasons, and that these reasons must relate to some intelligible and defensible conception of human well-being, it becomes clear that an adequate understanding of morality is no longer attainable in total independence of our beliefs about the nature and destiny of man" (1980:152).

[28] Rescher refers here to schemes but in order to avoid confusion (since like Davidson I want to do away with a scheme-concept distinction) I have replaced it with a term which fits our discussion better.

the shoals and narrows of a difficult world" (Rescher 1980:343). I would disagree with Rescher that we cannot judge the theoretical (i.e. meaning-content) assertion of different traditions. In fact, I believe that what Rescher proposes with regard to testing the functional efficacy of such traditions is one of the very important criteria for their overall evaluation, theoretical claims included. He is wrong to state that rival systems pose indeterminate truth claims on the theoretical level and that those two systems can be adjudicated only on the practical level. Rather the truth-determinancy on the practical level is an indication of the correctness of their truth claims with regard to their theory. What Rescher is promoting here is the primacy of practical over theoretical reason. I would like to utilize his helpful suggestions concerning the evaluative function of practical reason, without granting its primacy.

In his book *Rationality*, Rescher states that "rationality consists in the appropriate use of reason to resolve choices in the best possible way" (1988:1). He distinguishes three spheres of rationality: cognitive (what to believe or accept?); practical (what to do or perform?) and evaluative (what to prefer or prize?) which are interwoven together as we proceed to make rational choices. As Rescher himself indicates, 'practical reason' is never implemented in a vacuum, rather both cognitive and evaluative reason have to be appropriated in order to make a rational choice about any particular course of action. Our factual contentions (the domain of the cognitive reason) as well as the appropriate ends (the realm of the evaluative reason) ought to inform practical reason with regard to the right choices of action (1988:3). Furthermore, each aspect of our rationality has to satisfy the 'desiderata of reason,' such as: consistency, uniformity, coherence, simplicity, and economy.[29] Thus, instead of insisting

[29] Rescher 1988:16. Rescher defines demands of consistency as "avoid self-contradiction," uniformity as "treat like cases alike," coherence as "make sure that your commitments hang together," simplicity as "avoid needless complications," economy as "be efficient."

on the primacy of practical reason (as Rescher would have it), we could still concern ourselves with the appropriateness of the answers a given system provides for the praxis of our lives.

How can we, though, apply the evaluative function of the practical reason without running a danger of utilitarianism? Is there a place in this position for our deep convictions such as, for example, Christian faith? Should we simply look for whatever works? My answer to the latter question is yes and no. Yes, if by "whatever works" we mean the kind of account of everything that allows us to pursue our real or best interests and no if we mean by that phrase simply whatever satisfies our greatest fancies.[30] The value of such an account is not so much that it works (though that counts too) but rather that it is the best and the most adequate system we are able to construe at the present moment. If the system works it is only the end product of the fact that it is already the best and true (or most adequate) account (as far as we can tell) of everything.[31] Hence, all attempts at introducing

[30] By "best interests" I mean those interests we ought to pursue rather than those we merely desire or want. Thus, to follow our best interests will entail doing the very best one can under the circumstances. See Rescher 1988:6-7. This concept is closely related to MacIntyre's concern that our lives should be organized around an appropriate end or telos. This happens when an individual is engaged in what he calls "practice." He defined practice as: "any coherent and complex form of socially established cooperative human activity through which goods internal to that form of activity are realized in the course of trying to achieve those standards of excellence which are appropriate to, and partially definitive of, that form of activity, with the result that human powers to achieve excellence, and human conceptions of the ends and goods involved, are systematically extended" (MacIntyre 1984:187).

[31] I am not attempting to recourse into any foundationalist rhetoric. Instead, I want to argue that each one of us needs to pursue what we find the most compelling and reasonable according to our own position and consider it as true for us. I do not subscribe to the idealized form of "the truth" as "the whole truth and nothing but the truth" but wish to affirm the meaning of "truth" as the best provisional overall account of reality (I incorporate "provisional" in order to recognize a certain open-endedness of even our best accounts, i.e. they are never final in all respects). Cf. Rescher 1988:80-83, 150-153.

utilitarianism into this view are illegitimate. But where is the place in this approach for religious considerations?

Stout is right that there is no rational way to convince others that the best overall system should include our belief in God. As he says,

> If it could be shown by modes or reasoning commonly recognized that belief in a specific sort of God were both justified and essential for realization of the common good, we ought not to go on showing liberal tolerance to religious dissenters. It is precisely because we fall so far short of rational agreement or objective certainty in religious matters that the right to religious freedom obtains in our society.[32]

At the same time he recognizes that the best overall account may incorporate a belief in God, though it does not necessitate this belief (Stout 1988:122). What MacIntyre does not seem to realize is that the fragmentation of our pluralistic society is an inevitable consequence of the fact that there is no rational agreement on the matters of religious belief. Of course life would be much simpler and more ordered had we had a convincing proof that Christianity is true but this is not the case. As a result, we have no choice but to respect our various positions on moral issues and be open to learn from others as well as argue for our own system of beliefs. To expect anything else but diversity in that area would be unreasonable and utopian. The sort of consensus MacIntyre would like to see could be expected only in the ideal circumstance that we all have access to "the whole truth and nothing but the truth." In this case, since MacIntyre is a Christian (and for those of us who share this faith), he can hope for the realizations of his expectations only in the eschatological fulfillment of times. In the

[32] Stout 1988:226. Stout refers here to the 'common good' understood in Aristotelian sense. Cf. Rescher 1988:1-2.

meanwhile, instead of painting a tragic picture of the modern society, MacIntyre should come to terms with the fact that all we have is an overlapping (still massive in Davidson's terms) consensus and that must do for the time being (Cf. Stout 1988:241).

As Christians, I think, we can vocalize our convictions cogently within the existing norms of what is required by rationality. We can ground our beliefs in God in the fact that the Christian worldview provides us with what we consider to be the best overall account of everything.[33] We do not have to follow MacIntyre in his rejection of pluralistic society or in affirming his failed concept of untranslatability and incommensurability. Guided by practical reason and assuming that languages of discourse are in principle translatable, we can test our traditions for their functional efficacy and make the corrections which are required by such evaluations. The need for dialogue with other religious as well as non-religious communities and disciplines makes such an endeavor enriching and fruitful. This scenario resembles a picture drawn by Hilary Putnam who depicted our modern situation by utilizing the well-known model of a Neurath boat. But Putnam modifies this model as well. He places in the boat in addition to science also ethics, philosophy and the rest of the culture. Furthermore, instead of a single boat there is a fleet of boats. Here is how he sketches the rest of the picture:

> The people in each boat are trying to reconstruct their own boat without modifying it so much at any one time that the boat sinks, as in the Neurath image. In addition, people are passing supplies and tools from one boat to another and shouting advice and encouragement (or discouragement) to each other. Finally, people sometimes decide they don't like the boat they're in and move to a different boat altogether. (And sometimes a boat sinks or is abandoned.) It's all a bit chaotic; but since it is a fleet, no one is ever

[33] This, of course, would need to be argued for.

totally out of signalling distance from all the other boats. (Putnam 1987:204)

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Book Reviews

In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John Gammie. Edited by Leo Perdue, Bernard Brandon Scott and William Johnston Wiseman. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, 318 pages.

Biblical wisdom has been variously described as an "intellectual tradition" (Whybray), "practical knowledge of the laws of life and of the world based on experience" (von Rad), the "quest for self-understanding in terms of relationships with things, people and the Creator" (Crenshaw) and an "effort to discover order in human life" (Murphy). *In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John Gammie* now proffers a fresh interpretation of this phenomenon. This volume's novelty lies in its comprehensivity—spanning two testaments, selected intertestamental and rabbinic texts, this survey captures wisdom's complexity with aclarity.

Much of this volume is concerned with meaning: what are the contexts in which the root *ḥkm* and its derivatives appear, and what are varied meanings which the texts' authors attached to these words? To answer this query, precision in the translation of individual words is pursued. Thus, although the word *ḥokmah* has been routinely translated as "wisdom," this simple one-for-one correspondence between Hebrew and English no longer suffices. As numerous essays illustrate, such an equation appears flat,

wholly intolerant of *ḥokmah*'s multi-dimensional character in Israel's sapiential tradition.

Perdue's essay on Job, for example, demonstrates that Israel's sages understood wisdom to possess a tripartite function: wisdom was a body of knowledge, a world-construction and a discipline that formed and informed character. Fox, likewise, conducts an epistemological exploration of Ecclesiastes. Qoheleth, the self-styled author of this text, is shown to have employed *ḥokmah* to encompass ingenuity, good sense and intellect. Di Lella's invesigation of Sirach, in contrast, suggests that wisdom, for this sage, was quintessentially a practical matter of fearing the Lord and observing the law of Moses. Yet another angle on wisdom is afforded by Fontaine's examination of its institutional dimension. Her essay reconstructs several distinct settings—the family and tribe, the court and the school, and suggests that each made an overlapping contribution to the composition, use and understanding of the meaning of wisdom in Proverbs 10:1–22:16, the so-called Solomonic collection.

From such analyses, directions of meaning are carved and the boundaries within which wisdom moved are delineated. No neat, all-inclusive definition emerges, however. The reader comes to appreciate that the variety of contexts employing *ḥokmah* or its cognates effectively thwart all attempts to encapsulate this protean phenomenon with a single definition. Indeed, a multiplicity of definitions is required if we are to properly understand the wisdom enterprise.

Given the fact that such care is exacted to identify constraints upon meaning, the omission of an essay on wisdom in the ancient Near East seems awkward. After all, biblical wisdom was not self-subsistent but was, instead, nourished by the intellectual traditions of its neighbors. As such, an essay which explored Israel's response—its borrowing, adaption or refutation of preceding sapiential utterances—would be helpful. This need to explore the interdependence of wisdom traditions is only heightened when the Egyptian concept of *Maat* or the Babylonian poem *Ludlul Bel*

Nemeqi are invoked to illustrate an author's point. Such references appear obtuse to those not conversant with the ancient Near Eastern sapiential tradition.

Beyond their concern for meaning, the contributors to this volume also endeavor to enlarge the parameters of the search for wisdom. More specifically, their essays trace wisdom's role in the Hebrew bible's non-sapiential traditions. In "Scribal Wisdom and Theodicy in the Book of the Twelve," for example, Van Leeuwen suggests that the end-redaction of this prophetic scroll is sapiential in character. Analogously, Joseph Blenkinsopp's "Wisdom in the Chronicler's Work" identifies a point of contact between the wise and the author of this historiographical work: the desire to convey moral teachings by showing the consequences of adherence to the law versus nonconformance. Readers who come to this volume assuming that wisdom's influence was confined to the books of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, Sirach, and Wisdom of Solomon will certainly be amazed at all the places where the sage's frequency is now audible.

The source of this sound—this willingness to recognize in other texts sapiential words, expressions, themes or objectives—may be traced back to the publication of von Rad's "The Joseph Narrative and Ancient Wisdom" in 1953. As this volume testifies, the sound of wisdom in these books continues to resonate. Here, the wave does not devolve into uncontrolled vibrato; the authors are fully cognizant of the difficulties involved. In particular, Terrien's essay on wisdom in the Psalter raises important methodological questions concerning how one can evaluate such correspondence among texts.

In the "Forward" Barr explains that wisdom and apocalyptic were a major interest throughout John Gammie's life. Appropriately, the final section of this volume in his honor explores wisdom's contribution to the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Thomas, Q, selected Pauline texts and the Book of Revelation. Traditionally, in New Testament scholarship circles, the matrices of wisdom and apocalyptic were conceived as antitheti-

cal; each had a discrete moment in a developmental process and their unique "languages" or worldviews effectively barred communication with the other. As this section makes clear, such a temporal scheme requires revision, for these two genres' formal and ideological characteristics are now observed to overlap in significant ways. As Collins comments in "Wisdom, Apocalypticism and Generic Compatibility," in the context of Judaism at the turn of the era, wisdom was "polymorphous and was justified in many children" (p. 185).

In Search of Wisdom: Essays in Memory of John Gammie is a veritable feast of wisdom scholarship. With its diverse array of concerns and methodological approaches, this volume is sure to please a gamut of scholarly tastes. The most satisfying part of this repast, however, is its willingness to admit that biblical scholarship had done wisdom a disservice; unwittingly, its narrow characterizations of wisdom drowned out wisdom's echo. In delineating wisdom's role in the shaping and editing of non-sapiential traditions in the Hebrew bible, selected intertestamental and rabbinic texts and early Christian writings, this volume has championed wisdom's voice and offered much food for thought.

—JENNIFER A. GAGE
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Texts Under Negotiation: The Bible and Postmodern Imagination. By Walter Brueggemann. Fortress Press, 1993, 117 pages.

Walter Brueggemann has long been known as an author with a prolific pen and creative imagination. He has, besides the work under review here, two other works from the same publisher with the word *imagination* in the title (and another with the word *creative*). With his long-established reputation as an interpreter who has great respect for the biblical text and for theological interpretation, Brueggemann has become an author popular with preachers. Through his interpretive works (e.g., *Genesis* in the Interpretation commentary series) and his position as McPheeder

Professor of Old Testament at Columbia Theological Seminary, Brueggemann has influenced and, one supposes, will continue to influence the preaching of the next generation of homileticians. Thus, because of his broad reach, this short work is of special importance for those who have an interest in the future of biblical interpretation in the church.

It seems that Brueggemann finds himself swept along on the currents of history into a new paradigm of thought: he finds himself another of the personages in the late twentieth century who have seen the "handwriting on the wall" for modernity (to use the appropriate Old Testament metaphor). The passive voice is used intentionally here, because Brueggemann finds himself neither advocate nor enemy of this new paradigm. He merely finds himself compelled by it to interpret differently. Positively, he does find reason to hope that this new paradigm provides renewed opportunity for the church: but opportunity has its attendant dangers.

Within the first chapter, entitled "Funding Postmodern Interpretation," Brueggemann provides a summary of the cultural changes that have overtaken us all and a description of the changed context for interpretation in which he finds himself. Thankfully, for the novice in postmodern thought, Brueggemann has provided his own synopses of what he considers the works most relevant to postmodern biblical interpretation. These include the works of Stephen Toulmin, Susan Bordo, Langdon Gilkey, Thomas Kuhn, Michael Polanyi, Richard Rorty and Jean-Francis Lyotard. Brueggemann's strength is in his ability to take the works of these authors and to show their relevance to the preacher. For example, after describing the new interpretive situation as *contextual*, *local* and *pluralistic*, Brueggemann explains how these terms relate to pastoral reality:

> The large, experienced reality faced daily by those with whom we minister is the collapse of the white, male, Western world of colonialism ... . This new reality touches each of us in threatening and frightening ways. It touches

> the economy and reaches right into our patterns of employment and retirement. It touches home and domestic authority in families. And ... the collapse makes us at least anxious and perhaps greedy, and in the end it leads to a justification of many kinds of brutality. (pp. 10–11)

In the second chapter, entitled "The Counterworld of Evangelical Imagination," Brueggemann provides what he calls a "provisional *thematization* of the Bible" to match the "pathological thematization of human experience that is dominant in our consumer economy" (Preface, p. ix). Here Brueggemann reveals his fundamental commitment to a Reformed theological perspective, despite his embrace of a new interpretive context. The text of the Bible provides the text from which a new world is imagined by the church within this pregnant period of change. Brueggemann wants the new matrix within which we find meaning and from which we live and act as a community to spring from a fresh interpretation of the biblical texts. He has the will to imagine, *in the face* of an all-controlling consumerism, a world of healing, redemption and transformation. Much like Karl Barth, Brueggemann is a Reformed theologian, giving the biblical text a preeminent position in the life of the church. However, Barth's call to enter the strange, new world of the Bible is echoed by Brueggemann with a difference: Brueggemann wants the reader to imagine a new reality, to imagine his or her own world in new ways with the help of the biblical text.

The third and final chapter, entitled "Inside the Counter-drama," provides concrete examples of Brueggemann's proposed reading of the Bible within a postmodern context. This reviewer was, at first, given his prior exposure to Brueggemann's interpretive style, strangely disappointed by the individual interpretations. They are, without doubt, the weakest portion of the book. However, they do serve the purpose of modeling Brueggemann's proposed interpretive technique. It was perhaps necessary in a work of this kind to interpret six quite disparate texts (Exodus 11:1–9, Deuteronomy 15:1–11, I Samuel 16:1–13, Jeremiah

4:23–26, Isaiah 55:1–3, and Proverbs 15:17) within the space of eighteen pages, but this reviewer would strongly urge that it not become common practice.

Overall, this reviewer finds Brueggemann's description of the present interpretive situation accurate. We are indeed, for better or worse, in a period of interpretive transition. We do indeed find ourselves convinced by and more interested in the particular, local and timely than the universal, general and timeless (to use Brueggemann's summary of Toulmin). However, this reviewer cautions the reader against a confusion of categories. Brueggemann sees postmodern biblical interpretation as requiring a "minimum of historical-critical work" (p. 90). However, just as Breuggemann would argue that the *theological* interpretation of biblical texts will continue to operate in a changed way within the new paradigm, so too I would argue will the *historical-critical* interpretation of these texts. The conventions of historical-critical interpretation have also changed (and are changing) to reflect our renewed interest in the particular, local and timely. These changes are to be expected; and so long as the biblical text continues to be identified as an ancient text, it will continue to be interpreted via historical-critical conventions (whatever they may become). As persons in the church, we read this text differently (theologically) than many of our neighbors. As persons with a common secular education within this pluralistic society, we read this text the same (historically, literarily, etc.) as many of our neighbors. I think Brueggemann would agree that the church would not do well to lose sight of either mode of reading.

GREGORY L. GLOVER
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Private Women, Public Meals: Social Conflict in the Synoptic Tradition. By Kathleen E. Corley. Hendrickson Publishers, 1992, 217 pages.

Feminist biblical studies over the past two decades have largely focused on biblical attitudes towards women. One of the more common trends has been to posit the uniquely inclusive nature of early Christianity, most frequently in contrast with Hellenistic Judaism. Studies which follow this route come under deserved criticism. Bernadette Brooten and Ross Kraemer, among others, have convincingly demonstrated that the view of Hellenistic Judaism as grossly oppressive to women is quite simply inaccurate—despite the assertions of scholars who seek to make Christianity appear more egalitarian. Even within the scholarship that does not harbor hints of anti-Semitism, one often finds the argument that the gender inclusivity of early Christianity was eventually overcome by an "outside force," the patriarchalism of Greco-Roman society. Positing a uniquely inclusive early Christianity has often come at the expense of accurate understandings of the relationship between early Christianity and its larger social and religious contexts. As Biblical scholars continue to attempt to reconstruct the history of women in the New Testament era, they must do so without neglecting the reality of the early Christian community's place *within* the larger social contexts of Judaism and Hellenism, thus sharing many traits with these contexts.

Private Women, Public Meals is Kathleen E. Corley's contribution to the reconstuction of women's social status in the New Testament era. In this revision of her Claremont doctoral dissertation, she calls into question the widely accepted view of the early Christian community as distinctively inclusive. Corley approaches the question of the early Christian attitude towards women by placing the Synoptic communities within the context of Greco-Roman society. She contends that a close review of ancient sources suggests that early Christianity was neither more nor less

inclusive than the larger Greco-Roman society of which it was a part. Corley studies the attitudes towards women's participation in standardized meals as representative of general attitudes towards women, thus following the arguments of Burton Mack (*The Myth of Innocence*) and Dennis Smith (Harvard dissertation, 1980) that communal meals were particularly revealing indicators of larger cultural forces. Bringing together strands of feminist, historical, and social anthropological studies in *Private Women, Public Meals*, Corley considers both the Synoptic and non-biblical texts. She contends that any egalitarian tendencies within Christian meal practice were reflections of a more general social innovation in which women of all classes were allowed to participate in public meals. Because this empire-wide innovation challenged gender- and class-based social hierarchies, a backlash resulted. Corley argues that distinctive combinations of both the innovation and the criticism of it is reflected in each of the Synoptics. Most interestingly, Corley's conclusions regarding the specific attitude towards women's participation in public meals call into question the traditional feminist association of Luke with inclusivity and Matthew with Jewish patriarchalism.

After a review of relevant scholarship (chapter 1), Corley considers the ideologies surrounding table etiquette in Hellenistic society (chapter 2), amassing evidence from Greco-Roman, Jewish, and early Christian texts and inscriptions. Texts from the second century B.C.E. through the second century C.E. display evidence that women of all classes were attending public meals, a striking change from the earlier periods when the only women at such occasions were prostitutes, entertainers, and other lower-class women. Corley also demonstrates in this chapter that this innovation was not looked upon with universal favor; the textual evidence which accuses the women participating in public meals of sexual impurity and immorality suggests a conservative backlash against the increasingly public role of women.

Corley turns to the New Testament in the second part of *Private Women, Public Meals*. She devotes a chapter to each of the

Synoptics, focusing on the pericopes in which women, meals, or both are described. Mark, she concludes, is relatively uninterested in any debate over the role of women; although he includes scenes of women at meals, his failure to comment upon the appropriateness of their presence displays a "general lack of concern for the scandalous nature of his stories about women" (p. 107). In Corley's view, Luke seems to support the more conservative ideology by using "meal terminology to encourage subtly the more traditional Greco-Roman role for women" (p. 144). When Luke's descriptions of meals contrast with those of Mark by leaving the presence of women ambiguous, Corley contends that the author is doing so out of deference to the conservative opposition to women's participation in these meals. Most surprisingly, Matthew, which has long been seen as the most socially conservative of the Gospels, "portrays an egalitarian community which gathers together for meals like a household ... " (p. 178), in which women are allowed to participate without censure. Corley contends that Matthew, far from being socially conservative, not only portrays women as participating in public meals, but is more than willing to risk the ire of the conservative backlash.

Corley's general argument is persuasive, more because of recent social trends in this century than her analyses of the individual Gospels. As women in the United States have moved into the "public realm," the cries for their return to "traditional roles" and "family values" grow increasingly strident. This pattern makes it altogether reasonable that in the New Testament era, as women of all classes were beginning to participate in meals, a conservative backlash developed against their participation. Unfortunately, weaknesses in some of Corley's analyses make the persuasiveness of her argument more reliant upon this connection than one would wish, if only because a reader with a different view of contemporary trends may well find Corley's argument altogether untenable. Too often, the conclusions she draws seem unsupported. For instance, much of Corley's analysis of the Gospel writers' attitudes towards women is based on what she sees

as a traditional and close association between tax collectors and prostitutes. This association leads her to assume that when Jesus is described in the gospels as eating "with tax collectors and sinners," the presence of women is implied. While it is clear that some tax collectors were closely connected to prostitutes, the references which Corley cites do not make it clear that this was an assocation applied generally to all tax collectors. As a result, her analyses of the passages in which Jesus eats with tax collectors are a bit tenuous. A second concern regarding her analysis of New Testament passages is her reliance on the Q source. Corley attempts to draw inferences about one author's view of women based on how he presumably edited the story handed down from Q. Since the content of Q remains uncertain, this strategy also leads to some doubts about Corley's analysis.

These criticisms aside, *Private Women, Public Meals* is a clear step forward in the attempt to place early Christian communities within their larger contexts. The strength of the literary-historical analysis will be particulary useful to those interested in the social position of women within Hellenistic society of the New Testament era. Those interested in the socio-anthropological interpretation of the Bible will also find *Private Women, Public Meals* helpful. Corley's challenge to the governing critical paradigm regarding the relative liberalism of each of the Synoptics is thought-provoking and well worth further consideration.

—FAITH KIRKHAM HAWKINS
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The Five Gospels: the Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus: A New Translation and Commentary. By Robert W. Funk, Roy F. Hoover, and the Jesus Seminar. Macmillan, 1993, 553 pages.

The Five Gospels is the much vaunted product of the ballyhooed "Jesus Seminar." Taking its cue from the red letter editions of the Bible that print all words attributed to Jesus in red, *The Five Gospels* provides a new translation of the texts of Mark, Matthew,

Luke, John, and Thomas (in that order) with the words attributed to Jesus printed in either red, pink, gray, or **bold black**, according the Seminar's judgement on the probability that the words of the gospel represent the words of the historical Jesus.

A foreward on the translation (called the "Scholars Version") sets out the principles of the translation: it seeks to be as colloquial or formal as the original, to avoid homogenization of the gospel writers' styles for current liturgical use, to be free of any ecclesiastical control, to discontinue the theologically motivated capitalization of pronouns referring to divinity, and to use inclusive language where possible without glossing over the male-dominated structure and ethos of Mediterranean society.

The "Introduction," which given the specific purposes of *The Five Gospels* bears a large burden in persuading the reader to use the text responsibly, surveys the history of historical Jesus scholarship. It treats with insight and some measure of sensitivity—though perhaps not to all traditions (e.g., Southern Baptists)—issues of inerrancy and primitive christology. The introduction also gives an informative account of text history, the development of Jesus traditions, and the synoptic problem—all of which include non-canonical materials with appropriate weight. Finally, the introduction gives an overview of the tendencies that operate in the transmission and clustering of sayings materials and the rules which guided the Jesus Seminar as they made their judgements.

Evaluating *The Five Gospels* depends on understanding its purpose and audience. The goal of the Seminar's project is to make public and accessible the results of modern scholarship and, paraphrasing the Gospel of Thomas, to distribute the keys of knowledge that scholars have too often coveted for themselves. Given its popular audience, it is no flaw that the *The Five Gospels* does not measure up as a scholarly reference tool. Nevertheless, there are two types of evaluation proper to *The Five Gospels*: 1) of the scholarly principles which undergird the work and 2) of its probable success in accomplishing its popular objective.

The translation is a welcome project, carried though for the most part with style, sensitivity, and willingness to shock where the original would shock. It occasionally falls short of its goal of being as colloquial as the Greek it represents. For example, the translators of Mark's "street language" (p. xv) still refused to end a sentence with a preposition ("if salt becomes bland, with what will you renew it"). In addition, they chose "covenant" for διαθήκη instead of "will" or "contract" in spite of the *strictly* religious connotations of "covenant" and the broader legal semantic range of διαθήκη. The foreward describes the direction in which the translation moves, but, to use the idiom it claims for Mark, it is still "trash talkin'." That does not, however, undermine the very real and positive achievement of the translators.

The chief and significantly compromising flaw of the introduction is its practise of presenting the de-eschatologizing of Jesus not as the current judgement of the Jesus Seminar, but as the absolute truth appearing from beneath the rubble of previous scholarship as the Jesus Seminar heroically clears the way. "Slowly but surely the evidence began to erode that view ..." (p. 3) of the eschatological Jesus, the introduction claim, but the evidence has not acted inexorably; scholarly opinion has shifted—perhaps lastingly, perhaps fleetingly. My discomfort with this presentation of Jesus does not lie in disagreement with it. Largely, I agree with the current re-evaluation of the relationship of Jesus and the catastrophic eschatology of Q and the Synoptics. It is, however, as deceiving to write of that re-evaluation as if it were gospel truth as it is to print all the words attributed to Jesus in red. Just as a great deal of nonsense was traded in the nineteenth century under the banner of "the assured results of criticism," the editors of *The Five Gospels* are passing off work in progress (work which will *always* be in progress) as work accomplished. There are no "*assured* results of criticism." Admittedly, conveying an espistemology of probability rather than one of assurance in a "popular" work is difficult; it would be, however, one of the most valuable services the Jesus Seminar could provide.

Still, *The Five Gospels* deserves great credit for the kindness to its audience that it shows in its layout and production. The commentary and cameo essays illuminate the arguments that undergird the seminar's judgements and those areas of the study of Jesus traditions that are probably obscure to non-specialist readers. The diagrams are clear, the printing remains very readable through four distinct colours, and the excellent parallels arranged beside the text treat more than the five gospels themselves. In a perhaps inadvertant layout decision, however, the principles that guided the Jesus Seminar are set in the same type and colour as that reserved for the words most likely to be those of the historical Jesus—red. Whether decision or coincidence, this practise reveals the unwarranted assurance with which the introduction portrays the work of the seminar.

With some small impropriety, I described the Jesus seminar as "ballyhooed"; if the Seminar's work was intended solely for fellow scholars, the critique implied thereby might be appropriate, but with the publication of the *The Five Gospels*, the Jesus Seminar has undertaken the difficult though commendable task of making the processes and results of scholarship available and accessible to the non-specialist public. While it is possible and necessary to name the flaws of the *The Five Gospels* from both a scholarly and a popular point of view, the book will accomplish a positive purpose just by providing a persuasive competitor to the red letter Bibles. Unfortunately, in spite of the repeated explanations that the colours represent a survey of opinion and judgements of probability (with which the reviewer quite often agrees), it is likely that the colours will either be understood by the general public as a new "gospel truth" or rejected out of hand as the folly of secular scholarship. Like the dire warnings on cigarette packages, the caveats of the editors "no more than tentative claims based on historical probability" (ix, 6) will probably go unheeded by a distressing proportion of the public readership.

—JOHN W. MARSHALL
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

The Religion of Jesus the Jew. By Geza Vermes. Fortress Press, 1993, 244 pages.

This book is the third in a "trilogy" of significant monographs on the Jewishness of Jesus produced at ten-year intervals by the distinguished Qumranic researcher Geza Vermes, Professor Emeritus of Jewish Studies at Oxford University. The first was *Jesus the Jew: A Historian's Reading of the Gospels* (1973). In it, Vermes pioneered the image of Jesus as a wonder-working, torah-observant, holy man (*hasid*) comparable to other Jewish charismatics like his younger contemporary *Hanina ben Dosa* or the prior century's honored martyr *Honi ha Me'aggel* ("the Circle Drawer"). The "sequel" to this was *Jesus and the World of Judaism* (1983), a collection and revision of ten previously published essays supportive of Vermes' views and methods. Then, right on schedule, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* appeared last year completing Vermes' line of research by offering a detailed content-analysis of the religious message of Jesus, the Galilean *hasid*.

Taken as a whole, Vermes' work typifies the catalytic force of Jewish scholarship upon the burgeoning field of Jesus Research. Convinced that Bultmann's Christology lacked historical grounding, New Testament theologians in the 1950s proposed a modest, kerygmatically-circumscribed, "new quest" for the historical Jesus (e.g. E. Käsemann, "Das Problem des historischen Jesus," 1954, E.T. in *Essays on New Testament Themes*, 1964; and G. Bornkamm, *Jesus von Nazareth*, 1956, E.T. 1960; also J. M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, 1959). However, their theological agenda provided Jewish scholarship with an unexpected opportunity to present Jesus as a Judaic sage (e.g. D. Flusser, *Jesus in Selbstzeugnessen und Bilddokumenten*, 1968, E.T. 1969). Embolded by a firm grasp of Rabbinics and also by new discoveries at Qumran and elsewhere (e.g. digs in Palestine, papyri in Egypt, text-studies in Europe, etc.), this Jewish initiative assumed a more historically optimistic view of

the Gospels than that of the "new questers." Today, this renewed sense of confidence is shared by many in Jesus research. In his new book, Vermes positively exudes it: "It is possible," he avers, "to extract, thanks to our considerably increased knowledge of Palestinian-Jewish realities of the time of Jesus, historically reliable information from non-historical sources, such as the Gospels" (p. 4).

Thus, well-assured, Vermes ventures "into the dangerous field of Jesus' religious message" (p. 4) to face a "new" task, "at least relatively speaking, for after Bultmann's revolution, the thought of Jesus was deemed as inaccessible as his life" (p. 10). Due to the limitations of his sources, Vermes presents not "a full, detailed and systematic account" of Jesus' teaching, but rather what is "significant and central" (p. 2). He begins (in preface) with a nagging question: "If Jesus was neither a political agitator, nor a teacher attacking fundamental tenets of the Jewish religion, why was he put to death?" To which, he responds that Jesus died a victim of circumstance, having done "the wrong thing (caused a commotion) in the wrong place (the Temple) at the wrong time (just before Passover)" in full view of "nervous authorities" in that pilgrim-thronged "powder-keg" Jerusalem.

In chapter 1, Vermes gives a brief but important review of selected Jesus Research. He especially finds support for his portrait of Jesus in the work of three former colleagues at Oxford, A. E. Harvey (*Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 1962), E. P. Sanders (*Jesus and Judaism*, 1985) and M. Goodman (*The Ruling Class of Judaea*, 1987). But he rejects restrictive methodological controls on his own "innovative" research, seeing himself (somewhat tongue in cheek) as "a true *British* pragmatist" (Hungarian born and European trained) with a penchant for "muddling through" (p. 7). To explain parallels between the Gospels and the Rabbis, he posits a mainstream of Jewish tradition as a "common *source*, written or oral — firm in substance but variable in shape" (p. 9).

Chapters 2, 3, and 4 seek to locate Jesus within Early Judaism, examining his positive attitude to the Law, his charis-

matic teaching authority, and his religious use of parables. Vermes stresses that "the general picture of Jesus emerging from the Synoptic Gospels is that of a Jew who conforms to the principal religious practices of his nation" (p. 13). He also shows that allegedly anti-Torah statements turn out (when critically examined) to be acceptable legal debates over "conflicting laws" or "the full extent of a precept" (p. 21). Jesus' shortened decalogue (Mark 10:19), golden rule (Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31) and great commandment (Mark 12:29–31) are viewed as "Torah summaries" consonant with Jewish "ethicising" tendencies (p. 44). His sparing use of scripture is deemed typical of a charismatic *hasid*. Vermes ends with an analysis of Jesus' parables as a self-interpreting form of Jewish *mashal* (contra the esoteric theory of Mark 4:10–12).

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 explore Jewish concepts of God's "Kingdom" and "Fatherhood" (sic) in terms of Jesus' message. Vermes thinks that Jesus taught a radical eschatological piety of individual *teshuvah* (repentence) and absolute *emunah* (trust in God) as a means of entering completely into God's emerging, but hidden reign. Since Jesus' eschatological expectation was one of intense immediacy, he also argues that it had no place, and literally no time, for apocalyptic signs or messianic redeemers. (Vermes, of course, has long denied that the Aramaic phrase "son of man" was ever used as a title.) According to Vermes, this eschatological vision "exclusively concentrates on the present moment, and does so not from a communal but from a personal perspective" (p. 191). Yet, it is not in this individual eschatological "now" that Vermes finds the "well-spring" of Jesus' faith, but in his "untiring effort to follow God as a model, a constant *imitatio Dei*" (p. 200).

Complete with name and reference indices as well as a bibliography, *The Religion of Jesus the Jew* commends itself to all who seek a better understanding of Jesus' Jewishness. As a book, it has only one serious flaw: Although supposedly an "epilogue" bringing "into sharp relief the difference between" Jesus and the

Christian religion (p. 10), chapter 8 is actually a polemic, best omitted. Strangely, Vermes, who has worked against anti-historical reductionisms by relating Jesus to his Jewish contemporaries, here drives a wedge between Jesus and his Christian followers. But the fault is due to inconsistency, not ill-will. For, Vermes seems to forget that both the "mainstream" contemporaries of Jesus and his apocalyptic followers have a right to be heard. (Or is "mainstream" Judaism just "normative" Judaism revived?) The disciples of Jesus knew him well and they founded an apocalyptically-oriented faith in his name. Is is not likely that apocalyptic hopes have more to do with the religion of Jesus than Vermes allows? If there was no communal dimension to Jesus' eschatological vision, why did he even bother to call together a group of disciples in the first place? One suspects there are still lessons that Vermes may learn from Jesus' apocalyptic followers (perhaps even one about the coming Son of Man).

—JOHN W. MORRISON
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Women and Jesus in Mark: A Japanese Feminist Perspective. By Hisako Kinukawa. Orbis Books, 1994, 156 pages.

As a Protestant, Japanese, female biblical scholar, Hisako Kinukawa brings her unique viewpoint to bear on a rereading of the second gospel with the aim of "the liberation of the silenced and the marginalized" (p. 28). This work is avowedly historical as Kinukawa seeks "to reconstruct the historical reality of interactions between women and Jesus using the gospel of Mark as our guide" (p. 4). Kinukawa's historical approach is multi-tiered, as four layers or stages of experience can be discerned in the Markan text: 1) the actual encounter between Jesus and the women; 2) the interaction between tellers and hearers of oral and literary traditions; 3) the transmission of oral and written sources between the tradents and Mark; and 4) the communication between Mark and his community. The author's heavy reliance upon the work of

Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza is indicated by the fact that the latter is cited in at least half of the footnotes in the introductory chapter on method alone.

Kinukawa's claim that "particularity is always connected to universality" (p. 1) allows her to draw parallels between her contemporary Japanese culture and that of the "biblical texts." Both societies are characterized as patriarchal—defined as "an ideology to legitimate male dominance in every unit of life" (p. 10)—and bound to a highly formal system of honor/shame and the corresponding concepts of purity/impurity. Using these heuristic paradigms, Kinukawa rereads the stories of the hemorrhaging woman (5:25–34), the Syrophoenician woman (7:24–30), the poor widow (12:41–44), the anointing woman (14:3–9), the women disciples at Jesus' death and resurrection (15:40–41; 15:47; 16:1), the empty tomb (16:1–8), and Jesus' attitude with regard to divorce, prostitution and adultery from the perspective of the women in the stories—something Kinukawa finds herself in the unusual position to do because she "can feel closer to the women of the Bible, since our experiences as women have so much in common with theirs" (p. 16).

Perhaps the most successful part of the book involves the sections in which Kinukawa displays this commonality by offering moving vignettes about the marginalization of people, particularly women, in ancient, previous, and current Japanese culture. For instance, in her analysis of the story about the hemorrhaging woman, Kinukawa discusses how societal shame has been cast upon Japanese women because of menstruation and childbirth:

> In Japan, women's bleeding has long since been considered polluting. Women used to isolate themselves in special lodges during their periods, during pregnancy, and after giving birth ... so that they might not contaminate food by cooking ... . Even when they returned home, they stayed in detached rooms for a while until their pollution might be cleansed. (p. 30)

Kinukawa contends that by understanding the role that honor/shame and purity/impurity played in Jesus' world (via her

stories about Japanese culture), one can appreciate all the more the "brave" act of the "anonymous," "contagious," and "poverty-stricken" woman by approaching Jesus and the "revolutionary and liberated" response of Jesus.

On the basis of her exegetical analyses of the aforementioned texts, Kinukawa has high praises for the women of Mark's gospel. She concludes that "the women led Jesus to become a responding 'boundary-breaker' ... . Jesus did not take the initiative until the women prepared him by stages to break down the boundaries" (p. 139). Thus, the women disciples are depicted as "close ... to ideal," while the male disciples, as is oft noted, are obtuse and non understanding.

As mentioned above, Kinukawa's descriptions of Japanese culture and customs are perhaps the most noteworthy part of her book, truly elucidating certain aspects of ancient Mediterranean life. Yet, they are heavily weighted in the first half of the book and all but absent in the latter half—save for a few examples, some of which are repetitive, in the penultimate chapter.

While this criticism is not of great significance in an of itself, it becomes problematic in chapter 7 wherein Kinukawa approaches the most difficult Markan text with regard to women facing the interpreter—the empty tomb story (16:1-8)—from a purely exegetical standpoint, without ever drawing upon insights from the unique vantage point she has sought to establish. In this chapter, the author presents a lengthy study of secondary literature, reviewing works by such scholars as Lincoln, Petersen, Boomershine, Tannehill, Malbon, Dewey, Schottroff, and Moltmann-Wendel. (Conspicuously absent is mention of J. Lee Magness' monograph, *Sense and Absence: Structure and Suspension in the Ending of Mark's Gospel* [Scholars Press, 1986]). After presenting this review, Kinukawa comes to the sudden, surprising, and unsubstantiated conclusion that "I can not find any reason [for the women's silence] except *Mark's androcentric mindset* ... . Mark depicts women, too, as fallible and parallels them with the disciples. Otherwise, *no man would have listened to*

him (p. 121, emphasis mine). It seems to me that a better explanation of this admittedly difficult text might be found by further examining the relationship of 1) the women's failure, fear, and silence in relation to the male disciples' failure, fear, and misunderstanding; and 2) the women's failure to proclaim what they were expressly charged to proclaim in relation to earlier instances in the gospel where people proclaim Jesus' messianic power and character when they are explicitly charged not to (e.g., 1:45 and 7:36).

Finally, Kinukawa herself asserts that "we can not ignore the fact that Mark, as he planned his Gospel, was always conscious of his audience, their circumstances, and their needs" and "we need to discover the horizons of knowledge and expectation of both Mark and his audience" (p. 25). Yet, Kinukawa never attempts to locate Mark's community, its *Sitz im Leben*, or its needs. Instead, the author simply writes in general terms about the world view of "biblical texts," thus obfuscating the particulars related to Mark's social setting. Is the reader to infer, then, that the prevailing world view—no matter where or when in the ancient Mediterranean world—conformed to the patterns of patriarchy, honor/shame, and purity/impurity?

In spite of these shortcomings, Hisako Kinukawa's investigation into the relations between women and Jesus in the second gospel offers a fresh perspective from which to read these familiar stories. The results of her analysis offers the reader of these texts—whether academic or lay person—a model which challenges both men and women alike to be brave and boundary-breaking in our attempts to live the gospel.

—CHERYL A. WUENSCH
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief. By George M. Marsden. Oxford University Press, 1994, 460 pages.

When scholars write the history of higher education in America, they usually tell the story of the progressive triumph of the university and free inquiry over the benighted forces of religion and reaction that dominated early American colleges. In this account, non-sectarianism and the American Association of University Professors are the heroes, and sectarianism and confessional colleges the villains.

In *The Soul of the American University*, George Marsden turns this story on its head. Marsden, a leading historian of evangelicalism and a recent president of the American Society of Church History, argues that the history of higher education in America has shut religion and traditional religious believers out of the academic mainstream. For Marsden, the heroes are the individuals and colleges that have resisted the universalizing onslaught of the educational establishment; the villain is that establishment, particularly as supported by liberal Protestantism.

Marsden begins his narrative with the colonial colleges—Harvard, Yale, Princeton—and with a brief bow to their ancestors in the medieval universities and English colleges. While the trend of his narrative traces the decline of religious influence on higher education, Marsden does not look back to some golden age; he argues convincingly that a tension between a classical humanism and Christian theology has run within collegiate education ever since the founding of the medieval universities.

From this starting point Marsden surveys the development of higher education in America. He stresses the important role in forming American society that educational institutions have played from the beginning and recounts how that society has tried to reshape those institutions—especially church-related ones—in its own pluralist image. Because school administrators felt called to serve the larger culture by helping to train citizens, they redirected

education away from their sectarian roots toward a supposed non-sectarian ideal. By encouraging and justifying this trend, Marsden concludes, liberal Protestants marginalized all religious belief, including their own. "Ironically, Protestant universalism (catholicity, if you will) was one of the forces that eventually contributed to the virtual exclusion of religious perspectives from the most influential centers of American religious life" (p. 5).

In his survey of the history of higher education in America, Marsden focuses his attention on the decades before and after he beginning of this century. During this period, the American college was reshaped by a number of forces, including the influence of the German university, the impact of science and positivism, demographic changes in the student body, and the professionalization of the professoriate.

This work fills an important void in the scholarship on higher education. While there has been a good deal written on religion and academia, Marsden's is the first broadly analytical, historical survey. He focuses on intellectual America's marginalization of religious belief, looking at the histories of "pace-setting schools," the colonial colleges and the major research universities that dominate American intellectual life. Marsden acknowledges that this approach leaves out many institutions, including women's and African-American colleges. Further, his stress on the intellectual and institutional place of religion within these colleges largely leaves out the students' experience of religion in their education. Nevertheless, this book provides a helpful historical survey of religion and higher education.

Yet *The Soul of the American University* is more than a narrative history. It seeks to explain and criticize the exclusion of religion from academia, on both philosophical and theological grounds. Philosophically, Marsden argues that there are no grounds to exclude religious believers from academic inquiry. The modern university, having bought into an objective scientific worldview, rejects religion and religious believers as inherently subjective. Marsden appeals to recent post-modern thought to

refute this rejection, pointing out science's own subjectivity. Religion, with its ultimate truth claims, is no different from other fields of academic inquiry and their truth claims, and thus should not be excluded from the university.

Marsden's (often implicit) theological argument is shaped by a sectarian ecclesiology that criticizes the liberal Protestant establishment. Religion has been disestablished in higher education, he argues, because liberal Protestantism, in trying to construct public education, claimed that its beliefs were and should be universal. "Ultimately the problem lay in the premise that American public schools should all teach the same ideology" (p. 329). Marsden's ecclesiology suggests that the proper role of the church—and, by extension, a church-related college—is to be particular, to serve a particular tradition and be faithful to it. This explains Marsden's support of Catholic higher education; Catholics had "one thing Protestants did not: universities with substantial religious identities" (p. 275). And this explains why organizations like the American Association of University Professors are Marsden's main villains; he sees AAUP attempts to set standards for academic freedom "as efforts to define and control a national culture at the expense of local cultures" (p. 306).

The terms "sectarian" and "non-sectarian" run throughout the book, but Marsden has transvalued them. In most histories of higher education, the sectarians are the obstacles to change, while non-sectarianism means progress. For Marsden, however, sectarianism is good; it means particularity, and traditional and local culture. Those who advocate non-sectarianism represent an oppressive and homogenized national culture.

This sectarian model of higher education is a direct challenge to the American tradition of public education, of the public school as a place that forms an American character. Marsden's sectarianism argues for an education that forms a person loyal to a particular tradition—in his case, a Christian education "distinctive, not only in theology, but in the most crucial practical philosophical understandings of human behavior and morality" (p. 61). This

model favors a plurality of institutions, each producing graduates distinctively in their tradition, as opposed to pluralism within institutions.

Marsden concludes with a reflection on modern American higher education; not unsurprisingly, this becomes a critique of liberal Protestantism, public education, and everyone's favorite opponent, "political correctness." He objects, for instance, to an academic culture in which conservative Christians are discriminated against for their stands on sexual morality (p. 432).

In making his arguments, however, Marsden leaves unanswered some vital questions. What does it mean to say that a college is or is not religious? Like his sectarian understanding of church, his definition of religion and religious education seems narrow, limited to a traditional belief system with a confessional statement and behavioral standards. He largely dismisses voluntary student religious activity as marginal to higher education. On a more basic level, what is the purpose of education, especially in a religiously pluralistic society like ours? Is it to produce people loyal to one tradition, or is it to shape participants in the larger culture?

Despite these critiques, I am not unsympathetic to Marsden's concerns. Many people—within and without academia—view higher education's claims to value-neutrality with alarm or distrust. Recent years have seen calls for a return of values to the classroom, yet without proposals for the source of those values. Marsden and his theological colleagues would argue that values can come only from particular religious traditions. And yet this view is hard to reconcile with a pluralistic national culture, a pluralism that is both exemplified in and tested by its system of higher education.

—DANIEL SACK
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Religion and Society in Frontier California. By Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp. Yale University Press, 1994, 241 pages.

Laurie Maffly-Kipp, a member of the religious studies faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, has unearthed fascinating archival materials for this study of religion in California during the gold rush years, 1848–1869. She marshals this evidence to tell three interconnected stories: 1) the attempt by Eastern evangelicals to transplant their religion to California; 2) the clash on the frontier of cherished antebellum values (e.g., ideals of wealth and piety); and 3) the creation of a new society with new patterns of religious adherence. Along the way, Maffly-Kipp tells other stories, including the sagas of the rare women who braved life on the frontier and struggled to achieve a semblance of domestic normalcy. Considered as a whole, the interwoven stories of Maffly-Kipp's narrative constitute an important and much-needed addition to the literature on American religious history.

Drawing on the journals and correspondence of missionary pastors and their sponsors, Maffly-Kipp shows that Eastern evangelicals viewed the "churching" of California as essential to America's millennial destiny. California, like the mythical El Dorado, was a land of pure potential. Some young men were reluctant to accept positions as missionaries in California, viewing such assignments as less glamorous than preaching the Gospel in foreign lands. To others, California was itself as exotic as any foreign country. One Methodist, who volunteered to serve as a missionary, declared that he was "ready for any missionary field, China, California, etc."

Most new missionaries, as well as their sponsoring organizations such as the American Home Missionary Society, had little understanding of the challenges of transplanting Eastern Protestantism to the Western wilderness. Missionaries who wrote letters to their sponsors pleading for additional financial assistance frequently were met with little sympathy. Mission boards, not

having witnessed the hardships of the California field, failed to understand why their modest initial investments did not bear greater fruits.

The causes of missionaries' troubles were not entirely financial. Part of the difficulty was demographic. As late as 1846, only 700 Anglo Americans resided in California. After the discovery of gold at Sutter's Mill in 1848, the population exploded, but it remained constantly nomadic, frustrating attempts by ministers to establish stable congregations. "My chapel is full," wrote one missionary, "and I never saw better attention, not half as much emotion. Yet my congregation presents more than one hundred new countenances every Sabbath. They hear once and are gone!"

The business of prospecting, dependent so much on luck, also posed new theological and ethical problems. "It upset the necessary balance between merit and rewards, so crucial to the perceived justice of the work ethic," according to Maffly-Kipp. Ministers preached against greed and related evils, but in the struggle to make ends meet even they sometimes resorted to panning for gold. Indeed, life for clergy and laity was precarious; as one prospector wrote, "Som men has luck and som has nun." Most unlucky were those prospectors who succumbed to disease. Burial rites were among the most common rituals ministers were required to perform. Maffly-Kipp tells of one pastor who, while on a stroll with his wife, was stopped by several men because he had a "clerical appearance." The men asked the minister to pray over a friend they were burying.

The pastor enlisted to perform the burial was atypical in that he had a helpmate. Most missionaries, as well as prospectors, either lacked female companions or had left them behind in the East. Indeed, of the 1850 population in California between the ages of 20 and 39, less than four percent was female. Many men longed for the presence of virtuous womanhood, and ministers' sermons reminded male churchgoers of the women back home and their high standards of morality. "Remember your mother!" exclaimed one cleric in a sermon urging his male flock to walk the

straight and narrow. The women who did make their way to California did not have it easy. Gone were the women's organizations where female companionship could be found. Only after the 1869 completion of the transcontinental railway (previous journeys to California normally were by ship via Cape Horn) did women migrate to California in greater numbers, enabling the widespread establishment of family life.

Maffly-Kipp argues that the frontier California experience was a "dress rehearsal" for the national urban revivals and institutional reforms of the 1880s and 1890s. In both arenas, transiency and cultural heterogeneity forced the creation of new patterns of religious adherence. The latter feature—heterogeneity—is left relatively unexplored by Maffly-Kipp, who intentionally concentrated on the experiences of Anglo Protestants. But frontier California marked the intersection of many cultures, and from this emerged a "marketplace of morals" where diversity reigns to this day. Exploration of this diversity, writes Maffly-Kipp, is part of the scholarly work that remains to be done on the religion of the American West. In *Religion and Society in Frontier California*, Maffly-Kipp lays a solid and impressive foundation.

—PETER J. THUESEN
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

The Wounded Heart of God: The Asian Concept of Han and the Christian Doctrine of Sin. By Andrew Sung Park. Abingdon Press, 1993, 176 pages.

Traditional Christian doctrines of atonement have focused primarily upon humanity's need for salvation from sin through the atoning work of Christ. However, the unsurpassed human sufferings of the twentieth century have influenced modern atonement theories so that they address not only humanity's sins of culpability but emphasize even more God's solidarity with the victims of sin in the cross of Christ. Thus, many modern versions of the theology of the cross have arisen in recent times (Moltmann,

Sobrino, Douglas Hall among many others). Andrew Sung Park, an associate professor of theology at United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio, joins this chorus of modern theologians in his book *The Wounded Heart of God*. Park, however, makes an important new contribution: he corrects and complements the Western doctrine of sin with the Asian concept of *han*.

According to Park, "*Han* is an Asian, particularly Korean, term used to describe the depth of human suffering" (p. 15). It is what people experience when they are the victims of injustice upon injustice. It is characterized by frustrated hope, collapsed feeling of pain, resignation, and resentful bitterness (pp. 15–20). Because *han* is the experience of the oppressed, Park proposes that it can provide a "perspectival change" (p. 13) and even a "theological revolution" (p. 73) in the Western doctrines of sin and salvation which have traditionally focused upon the sinners'/oppressors' need for forgiveness and not upon the victim's need for healing. Park points out that Western theologians, even liberation and feminist theologians, have grouped hopelessness, resignation, and melancholy as sins of despair. Park, instead, calls these *han*, the result or consequence of sin, and not sin itself.

After defining, analyzing, and identifying some of the *han* causing forces (capitalist global economy, patriarchy, racial and cultural discrimination) in the first three chapters, Park enters into theological discussion by examining the relationship between *han* and the traditional doctrines of sin, justification, and salvation. This is the crux of the book where Park boldly rearticulates some of the major Christian doctrines in the light of *han* (chapters 4–7). He proposes the reality of "original *han*" in place of the doctrine of original sin (p. 81). He rejects the latter and says that what is transmitted from parents to children is not sin but *han*. He proposes a doctrine of forgivingness of victims to counter-balance the doctrine of forgiveness of sinners. Park insists that there needs to be not only forgiveness of sins from God's side but forgiveness of the oppressors from the victim's side as well (p. 91). Furthermore, Park introduces a "doctrine of justification by love" to

complement the traditional doctrine of justification by faith. "Faith in Jesus Christ alone cannot stand by itself without involving the afflicted, for we know Jesus Christ, not in abstraction, but in and through those who suffer" (p. 98).

Park suggests that from the point of view of *han*, salvation is seen as a "participatory dialectic":

> This dialectical salvation is the relational, dynamic, and affective interaction between sinners and their victims, and the cooperative efforts of the two to dissolve *han* and sin ... . The oppressors (sinners) cannot be saved unless the oppressed (victims) are saved or made whole, and vice versa. In other words, no one is actually saved until all are saved. Salvation is wholeness, and no one can actualize wholeness by him or herself. (p. 101)

In this radically interdependent model of salvation even God needs salvation:

> "The cross of Jesus is a symbol of God's crying for salvation (*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*), because God cannot save Godself. If salvation is relational, then one cannot save oneself. God needs salvation! (p. 121)

In other words, since God suffers with creation God too experiences *han* which is ultimately expressed on the cross of Christ. This divine *han* can only be resolved when the *han* of the world is resolved. For Park, God is dependent upon the world and is a part of a never ending vortex of the sin and *han* of humanity.

But if God is also a victim, then how can a suffering God really help? Without a God who promises an eschatological resolution to the injustices and sufferings of this world, we can only have hope in ourselves. At times, Park comes dangerously close to collapsing God's transcendence into God's immanence.

Park echoes Moltmann when he says that "The cross represents God's full participation in the suffering of victims. That is, Jesus' death was the example of an innocent victim's suffering in which God was fully present. Yet every victim's suffering also involves God's presence" (p. 121). But Park does not link the

resurrection to his theology of *han*. At best the cross remains "the ultimate challenge to oppressors to make their choice between repentance and eternal death" (p. 124). But if the cross is only a persuasion to the oppressors, albeit a strong one, we have no assurance that they will finally make the right choice of repentance. Park's proposal lacks the dialectical relationship between the cross and the resurrection. It might be helpful to understand Park's theology as influenced by his process theological framework. Although he does not make this explicit, it is an underlying presupposition throughout the book.

After a short chapter on the potentials of interreligious dialogue for the theology of *han*, Park ends the book with proposals which would stop the vicious cycle of sin and *han*. One of Park's proposals is to create a global church community where churches can have their own banks and media resources which would fight the global capitalist economy, one of the culprits perpetuating *han* (p. 159). But many of Park's proposals, including this one, appear too idealistic.

One would have liked to see more of an Asian context in this book. Although Park mentions that *han* has roots in *minjung* theology (an indigenous Korean liberation theology), more dialogue with other *minjung* theologians would have been appreciated.

This is an important book for many reasons, the chief of which is that it powerfully introduces the concept of *han* as a theological resource to Western Christianity. *The Wounded Heart of God* also opens up many new theological avenues. For example, a fascinating corollary would be to apply the theology of *han* in the Reformed tradition using a trinitarian formulation rather than a process framework. Finally, an application of the theology of *han* to doing theology in an Asian-American context would be an exciting venture.

—KEVIN PARK
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Christology and Eucharist in the Early Thought of Cyril of Alexandria. By Lawrence J. Welch. Catholic Scholars Press, 1994, 160 pages.

In his foreword to Welch's book, Joseph Lienhard of Fordham University describes the work as "a careful study," an apt description indeed! The exposition unfolds like a minimalist piece of music, moving through a series of minute changes occurring at fairly widely spaced intervals. A succinct sentence on page 123 captures the theme of the book: "Cyril's entire interpretation of John 17 is a synthesis of his theology of worship and the Eucharist and Christology of the kenosis and the second Adam." The broader goal of the book, which is a revision of the author's doctoral dissertation at Marquette University, is to reassess Cyril's early Christology.

To achieve his goal, Welch begins by tracing the history of research on Cyril of Alexandria. This study comprises the first quarter of the book, but it is worthwhile for anyone wishing to follow the development of the schools of thought regarding Cyril. Welch starts with a discussion of the 19th century historian of dogma, Adolf von Harnack, and then moves chronologically to: Eduard Weigl, Adolf Struckmann, R. V. Sellers, Herbert du Manior, Georges Jouassard, Jacques Li baert, Henry Chadwick, Alexander Kerrigan, Dom Herman Diepen, Walter Burghardt, Georges M. de Durand, Aloys Grillmeier, Robert Wilken, Thomas Torrance, Ezra Gebremedhin, and Lars Koen.

Welch finds deficiencies (all stemming from Harnack) in the approach of each of these historians of doctrine. The foundation of all his criticisms is his insistence that the "Logos-sarx" framework is inaccurately applied to Cyril, if, indeed, it is still a useful concept at all. Li baert, for instance, was one who did apply the "Logos-sarx" framework to Cyril's Christology, contending that Cyril assumed an anthropology which reduced to inanimate flesh the humanity taken on by the divine Logos, leaving no role for a human soul. (Thus, it was only the flesh which suffered.) Salva-

tion, in this model, was achieved by the mere fact of the incarnation, through which Christ's person became the point of mediation between God and humanity, and his action in that person was superfluous. Li baert argued, further, that in holding to the "Logos-sarx" concept, Cyril was only following in the theological and anthropological footsteps of Athanasius. Later scholars such as Durand and Grillmeier modified Li baert's view to say that Cyril held a "Logos-sarx" Christology prior to the Nestorian controversy but that his later work allowed for the assumption of a whole, full humanity by the Logos.

Welch attributes this basic mistake in scholarship to the neglect of Cyril's exegetical works, most of which very likely were written before the Nestorian controversy, according to the chronology of Cyril's works which Welch provides in his introduction. Scholars such as Wilken and Koen recognize the significance of Cyril's exegetical writings, yet Welch sees a deficiency in their work due to their neglect of the central role played by the Eucharist in Cyril's theology. While Torrance, on the other hand, recognizes the importance of both scripture and Eucharist, he fails to integrate Cyril's indispensable "second Adam" motif into his account of Cyril's Christology. Welch sets out to correct all of these defects through an in-depth study of Cyril's Commentary on John, the most complete of his extant commentaries, probably written by 428.

Chapter three addresses the "second Adam" motif and its partner, always linked in Cyril's theology, the "kenotic" motif. These motifs appear very clearly in Cyril's comments on John 17, Jesus' high priestly prayer; thus, John 17 forms the framework for chapter three. According to Welch, these two movements are Cyril's preferred way of speaking about Christ's two natures, rather than the static categories attributed to him on the basis of his polemical writings. "Kenosis" refers to the beneficent emptying out of the Son of God throughout his earthly ministry, especially in his death on the cross. Simultaneously, as the "second Adam," Christ restores the human nature which he shares to its

prelapsarian state by his obedient life, culminating in his passing on of the gift of the Spirit after the resurrection.

Chapter four explores the eucharistic element of Cyril's Christology. The Eucharist is the historical event through which the baptized are gathered up into the body of Christ, the head. In this "anakephalaiosis," Christ as mediator and high priest offers all things to God. Consonant with this is Cyril's "Logosepiclesis," (not "Spiritepiclesis"), after which the elements of bread and wine become Christ's body and blood. As Welch insists, for Cyril the Logos is never the "naked Logos," but always the Logos incarnate, that is, Christ. Welch asserts (contra Gebremedhin) that it is Cyril's understanding of the Eucharist that shapes his Christology, and not vice-versa. The Eucharist is salvific; thus Christ must be both God (or he could not save) and human (or it is not we who would be saved.) Welch places this view of Cyril's in the context of Cyril's wider understanding of the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. For Cyril, the Old Testament portrays types which come to full realization in Christ as portrayed in the New Testament. Thus, following the work of Luis Armendariz, Welch notes that Cyril contrasts Christ, whose mediatorship through prayer, worship and sacrifice saves humanity, with Moses, whose mediatorship by means of the law condemns humanity.

The final chapter describes the effect of salvation according to Cyril. Welch here distinguishes himself from Burghardt, who maintains that Cyril sees the state of saved humanity as better than the state of created humanity prior to the fall. Though both Burghardt and Welch concede that Cyril himself is not entirely clear on the issue, Welch argues that what evidence there is allows, if not supports, his view that for Cyril the Logos is the incarnate Christ even at creation. Thus, salvation is a restoration of the original image of God in humanity, which is the image of Christ, including the immortality and incorruptibility of his body. The fall was a rebellion of the free will against Christ, resulting in a loss of the Spirit. The coming of the incarnate Christ to earth was necessary

for a firm reception of the Spirit on our behalf by one who would not abuse his free will. This last chapter is the most problematic, leaving many questions unanswered, but Welch freely admits that, and offers the chapter as a stimulus for further research.

The weakest part of the work is, regrettably, the section on the Eucharist in chapter four. This chapter fails to illustrate in a convincingly clear manner Welch's thesis that Cyril's Christology is dependent on his view of the Eucharist. One can see beyond the shadow of a doubt that the Eucharist is indispensable for an accurate understanding of Cyril's Christology, but that it forms the basis for Cyril's Christology is affirmed but not demonstrated. Part of the problem is the location of this discussion in the book; there is so much material leading up to it that it is difficult to avoid the overwhelming impression that Cyril's eucharistic vision stems out of the christological foundation which has been laid, and not the reverse.

Finally, a word must be said about the physical book itself. The editing was extremely lax. The reader must overlook or puzzle over a plethora of typographical errors and must work to make sense out of poorly constructed sentences, clauses in which subject and verb do not agree or in which there are two verbs to choose from, and sentences with either lacunae or extra words and clauses. Because of these frequent difficulties the book strikes me as overpriced at $39.95 for the paperback and $59.95 for the hardcover.

—CAROLYN SCHNEIDER
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

Reformed Reader, Volume II: Contemporary Trajectories, 1799 to the Present. Edited by George W. Stroup. Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993, 369 pages.

It is hard to imagine a more difficult editorial task than to select and compile into a single volume those texts from nineteenth and twentieth century centuries which best represent "the living

character of the Reformed tradition," but this was precisely the task put to George W. Stroup, Professor of Theology at Columbia Theological Seminary in Decatur, Georgia, and the result of his efforts is the second of a two-volume work dedicated to describing the development of Reformed theology over the last five centuries. The first volume, subtitled *Classical Beginnings, 1519-1799*, edited by John Leith and Stacy Johnson, also published in 1993, presents texts which shaped early Reformed theology. This second volume presents texts emerging from "contemporary Reformed theology." Together these volumes make a unique contribution and mark a significant achievement in the life of the Reformed tradition, being the largest collection of primary texts, spanning nearly five hundred years, from the widest variety of Reformed thinkers on the widest range of theological topics, ever assembled into a single work.

Like the first volume, the second is organized according to the following chapter headings: 1) Concerns and Methods of Theology, 2) The Doctrine of God, 3) Maker of Heaven and Earth, 4) Jesus Christ, 5) The Holy Spirit and the Christian Life, 6) The Church, 7) Politics, Society, & Culture, and 8) Eschatology. The range of issues elaborated under these rubrics is considerable. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction which places the subject in the modern discussion and proceeds with writings of various theologians, creeds, confessions, and ecclesial documents out of the Reformed tradition. Each chapter and most subtopics are accompanied with a bibliography. What is so fascinating about the idea behind this book, which alone is worth its price, is that a variety of Reformed thinkers are put into (albeit indirect) conversation with one another on a given topic and, in the process, not only is the breadth and width of Reformed perspectives rendered, but the issue at hand is given a particular frame and focus. To account for the different positions taken Stroup often provides perceptive clues as to the specific point or points upon which a given issue turns. This proves to be a very helpful aid as it assists one in tracing the development, or, as the

subtitle indicates, the "Contemporary Trajectories," of a particular doctrine or position within the Reformed tradition throughout several generations.

The first chapter provides as good an illustration of this as any. Stroup begins with a discussion of modern theology's "preoccupation with the problems of methodology" emerging as a result of the Enlightenment's critique of "many of the assumptions and categories of classical theology" and cites Schleiermacher's *Speeches*, first published in 1799, as a landmark response to this critique, ushering in the era of modern theology as it, according to Stroup, "sought to make religion intelligible to those who could no longer accept Christian faith in its traditional language and form." To illustrate the variety of representative perspectives on method which have prevailed throughout the last two centuries, Stroup cites a passage from Schleiermacher's *Glaubenslehre* as coming from one side of the spectrum (psychological subjectivism?), a passage from Charles Hodge's *Systematic Theology* as representative of another side (propositional objectivism?), and then a passage from Karl Barth's *Church Dogmatics* as an example of a twentieth century position transcending both the above routes of the nineteenth century's "turn to the subject." While a similar pattern can be traced throughout most chapters, Barth is not portrayed as the embodiment of any kind of final synthesis. Though his work does figure prominently, other trajectories beyond Barth are made abundantly manifest. Such trajectories indicate the influence of various theologies of liberation, the concerns of contextuality, and other concerns which have shaped modern theology over the last thirty years. The voices represented here are as diverse as Jürgen Moltmann, Jorge Lara-Braud, John Hick, Letty Russell, Chung Hyun Kyung, Paul Ricoeur, Hans Frei, etc.

Either of these two volumes has the potential of serving as a highly effective teaching tool, e.g., in an introductory course on the Reformed tradition. The arrangement of primary sources under these eight distinct theological themes practically beg the

reader to trace the development of Reformed thought and to discover the distinctively Reformed thread running (allegedly) through them all. At the end of each chapter, having heard a variety of Reformed voices on a given theme, one is almost forced to ask: What does this theologian see that the other does not? What do these opposing positions have in common? Are there presuppositions each share? In short, this book lends itself to posing the kind of rich and nuanced questions which often bear much theological fruit.

However, in using it to this end there will no doubt be a certain amount of frustration on the part of some readers. For instance, having read several theologians back-to back with little, if any, commentary, it will obviously be difficult for some readers, particularly those previously unacquainted with the Reformed tradition, to discern the distinctive Reformed thread running through the variety of texts presented. From these readers I can already anticipate such questions as, "Why is this person included as a Reformed theologian?" and "Is this really what Reformed folk believe?" In fact, even for those of us born and raised in the Reformed tradition it is difficult to understand why some texts were cited as reflecting a distinctively Reformed perspective. For example, Paul Ricoeur is cited twice and called a "French, Reformed philosopher," but I am hard pressed to figure out what makes Ricoeur "Reformed" and seriously question whether he, himself, would own such a title. The same might be said, though with less justification, about Schleiermacher. I am familiar with some of the arguments justifying his Reformed pedigree, but owing to statements suggesting his own ambivalence toward the matter and his own, albeit early, but unrepudiated self-designation as a "*Herrnhutt* of a higher order," it is difficult to understand why he figures so prominently as an exemplar of nineteenth century Reformed thought. One wonders what qualifies him in a volume like this to be quoted more often than any other Reformed theologian except Karl Barth. What I am suggesting here, by way of illustration, is that tracing the trajectory of

Reformed thought through various representatives is a very tricky business which forces one to consider a myriad of factors, influences, and means of shaping. That is, it forces one to stretch and to grow theologically. But reading such rich and diverse theological texts side-by-side and being forced to make comparisons and draw contrasts between them, evokes these kinds of interesting, if not provoking, questions that readers will undoubtably ask and, happily, are the kinds of questions the *Reformed Reader* seems naturally to elicit.

—RICHARD E. BURNETT
PRINCETON THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

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"Building an Hermeneutical House on Shifting Consciousness: Orality, Literacy, Images, and Interpretation"

An earlier version of this paper was presented in the American Biblical Hermeneutics Section at the Southeast Regional Society of Religion conference, 1993.

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INDEX

Koinonia Journal

Volume VI 1994

ARTICLES